# CREATING SPACES AND SPACES OF CREATION: ARTISTS AS PRECARIOUS URBAN REGENERATORS IN NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

R S PRESCOTT

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# CREATING SPACES AND SPACES OF CREATION: ARTISTS AS PRECARIOUS URBAN REGENERATORS IN NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

REBECCA SHOSHANA PRESCOTT

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**Abstract**

The interrelationship between art and urban space organised under the banner of the Creative City requires further critical attention. Framing artistic practice as instrumental in urban regeneration often occludes the multiple, diverse practices that it encompasses, and the numerous urban spaces that are quietly and incrementally in the process of 'becoming.'

Current research has not yet formulated a specific descriptor for artistic interventions in urban space that is attentive to the multiple diverse practices yet succinctly surmises the phenomena. As a response, this research introduces the concept of the interstitial as both a physical aspect of urban planning, but also a conceptual tool to think about the relationship between self and place.

This thesis explores the interrelationship between art and urban space evident in the experimental practices, materialities and infrastructures of artist-run interstitial spaces; the (often) temporary reclamation of derelict or disregarded urban space for creative 'meanwhile' use. Drawing from ethnographic data collected across the artist-run interstitial spaces in East Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, this research demonstrates that artistic practice within interstitial space has the ability to 're-write' the Creative City script through a re-orientation to artistic practice that is not ameliorative to urban ills, but allows for attempts to 'dwell differently'. However, whilst the interstitial allows for attempts to dwell differently, these attempts are mediated by the literal and metaphorical concretization of the interstitial.

This thesis demonstrates, through the experiences of those living within it, that the interstitial engenders a precarious form of inhabiting the city, an informal set of artistic practices and a makeshift approach to building space. It is mobile and also fixed, ephemeral as well as enduring. It restates that we must explore forms of regeneration that keep cities complex, but incomplete. The gap between the lived city and the city that exists in our imaginations is immense; yet the inventive artistic practice that thrives in the interstices could, and should form the connective tissue between the two.

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others. Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Business and Law Faculty Ethics Committee on the 21st October 2015.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 76,558 words

Name: Rebecca Shoshana Prescott

Signature:

Date:

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# Chapter One

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Creating Space/Spaces of Creation: the interstitial

This thesis explores the dualism between art/place through the places artists inhabit and the relations between them from a new methodological, empirical and theoretical perspective. Theoretically, it draws on notions of relational space, dwelling and the everyday to interrogate the re-appropriation of urban sites left empty by disuse or disinvestment for creative urban practice. Whilst these physical spaces inform the research there is the recognition that spatial practices are increasingly

> "The product of the intricacies and complexities, the intertwinings and the non-interlockings of relations, from the unimaginably cosmic to the intimately tiny"
>
> (Massey 1999:8)

This thesis is an attempt to better understand the relationship between artists and urban space. However, I am interested in a very specific form of urban space, formed out of disuse and disinvestment. The most significant concept of the study is the term interstitial – that is, pertaining to spaces that intervene between one thing and another. The concept of interstitial space is, as yet, underutilised in research outside of the field of urban geography. However, I argue interstitial space is important because of how it allows us to re-examine the interrelationship between people and place, the social and the spatial. It does this through re-orienting ourselves to a form of space, and a way of using space, that differs from conventional planning.

The empirical focus is on the mechanisms of placemaking and re- making for artists through an embedded and embodied process of being and becoming a resident within interstitial space. Indeed, the most important concept of this thesis is the term interstitial. As Thrasher describes the interstitial pertains to

> "spaces that intervene between one thing and another. In nature, foreign matter tends to collect and cake in every crack, crevice and cranny – interstices. There are also breaks in the structure of the social organisation"
>
> (Thrasher 1927:20).

Thrasher's work presents us with two conceptualisions of 'interstitial'. The social and the spatial. Therefore, the interstitial bridges the gap between the material and the relational, offering new insights into the processes of spatial creation.

The relationship between artists and space is ambiguous; for a practice in which the majority of the works are temporary and fleeting (a concert or play can be performed multiple times but will imperceptibly alter with each repetition) being rooted in place provides authenticity and provenance. We think of the beat poets of San Francisco, Bauhaus in Berlin or the 'Cool Britannia' artists in Hoxton, London. These spaces are not 'neutral' but actively involved in the production and positioning of art. Similarly, performative and embodied artistic practices are significant as they open up study of spatial practices that both shape and influence the ways in which we inhabit and interact with space.

In looking at the relationship between artists and urban space, I have drawn from three distinct bodies of literature. The first concerns the Creative City and culture-led regeneration, how artists' presence has been reframed as a precursor to socio-economic renewal. The second draws from Heidegger (1927) and Lefebvre (1991b)

in looking holistically at how artists make and remake space. The third concerns artistic practice, and how this is affected by temporary, often precarious conditions.

My goal in intersecting and juxtaposing these diverse perspectives on the topic is to create a Venn diagram, overlapping the social spaces in which artists operate. In making a map of both the obvious and the more hidden places in which these conversations have developed, I have attempted to describe and interpret the range of competing and often conflicting narratives associated with it. I have used these diverse disciplines to create a multi-faceted exploration of the connection between the life worlds of artists and the geographical worlds they construct. How place and agency intertwine and recreate each other by examining how artists define, inhabit, manipulate, dominate and eventually vacate space. Furthermore, how landscapes are constructed and lived – diging through the layers of meaning constructed through everyday life.

Following Lefebvre, I want to encourage the notion that space is not a neutral container or pre-existent stage, but something (re)produced through social processes (Lefebvre 1991b). In this we can consider what 'forces' act upon the body – other actors, the artworld, the market and urban policy hold the artist in tension in a series of heterogeneous relationships. In examining these tensions, I aim to explore how place and agency intertwine and recreate each other through the processes by which artists define, inhabit, manipulate, dominate and eventually vacate space.

Contemporary art practices are increasingly held in tension by the dual desire for mobility and attachment to place. The temporality of artists 'residencies' in place is also central to this thesis. Whilst the term 'resident' is etymologically linked to residence, suggesting stability and permanence, artists' lifeworlds are increasingly

subject to the flux of economic forces, urban planning and policy agendas. Therefore, being 'resident' by extension means being periodically 'non-resident'. Questions remain over this temporality and what it represents – whether a 'line of flight' once an area becomes inauthentic (Florida 2002) or an eviction driven by the enactment of gentrification. Alternately, whether factors such as the 'short-termism' of funding, workspaces and labour practices (Ross 2008) have a role in this constant relocation.

In order to offer unreplicable insight into the place-bound and place-making processes and meanings that sustain artists and artistic practice, this thesis pursues the following interrelated research aims:

- To investigate the re-appropriation of urban sites left empty by disuse or disinvestment for inventive artistic practice.
- To explore the process of spatial creation within interstitial space: how artists imagine, transform, negotiate and vacate space.
- To gain an understanding of the everyday of artists within these interstitial spaces
- To explore the recursive relationship to the built environment that interstitial space engenders
- To situate this interstitial space within wider narratives of culture-led regeneration and the Creative City.
- To map the wider structures that promote or constrain artistic practice in the city.
- To explore the movement, and rationale for movement, of artists within and between spaces of artistic production

These aims have informed three main research questions:

- How can we utilise an increased understanding of the everyday practices of artists to extend the conceptualisation of artist-led interstitial spaces within the UK?
- How does our understanding of interstitial artist-led spaces add to current conceptualisations of the Creative City?
- How do external factors and individual agency intertwine and interlock in the construction, habitation and vacation of artist-led interstitial spaces?

These questions provide a framework for an in-depth exploration of artistic practice in urban space. In this, this study uniquely explores the lived experience of artistic practice in all its messiness and complexity.

## 1.2 Research Evolution

As a researcher I have approached this thesis with the goal of understanding the complex and messy word of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt 1994). This research follows a relational ontology in which conceptions of the separate, self-sufficient, independent, rational 'self' or 'individual' are rejected in favour of notions of 'selves-in-relation' or 'relational beings'. Human beings are viewed as interdependent rather than independent and as embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations. Following a constructivist paradigm; this research also assumes that the world is co-constructed and that epistemological interactions between researcher and subject, between "knower and known are inseperable" and so is the knowledge created (Lincoln and Guba 1985:37). Working

under these assumptions, 'truth' can be seen as a product of social processes, constantly reworked by social interaction. Direct involvement in the everyday experience of artists provided a strategy for gaining access to phenomena that are most often observed from the view of a nonparticipant.

The dynamic relationship between artists and place has become the focus for both academics and policy makers. However, as Evans (2005) notes "when research on the arts and urban regeneration has featured in academic articles, they tend to be either descriptive or uncritical case studies or highly critical (but lacking in robust empirical evidence)" (Evans 2005:965). This thesis aims to counter this by producing research that is more attuned to the particular challenges of the local and the vernacular. In this, it aims to provide a blueprint for policy that is more sympathetic to individual localities, rather than the copy/paste policy criticized by Evans (2009). As he continues, "local conditions and variations such as the historical, social and cultural identities, governance, geographies/scales, should be equally considered in order to avoid falling into a reductive trap of universality at the cost of understanding the particular" (Evans 2009:1006).

Whilst others (Bain & McLean 2013) have produced nuanced accounts of artist's spaces, I wanted to add to this by producing an account of a space in 'becoming'. This research focuses on the East Pilgrim Street Block in Newcastle upon Tyne, a collection of four empty office blocks taken over incrementally by creative and cultural organisations. With demolition scheduled, the block was at a crucial juncture in regards to future development. Additionally, the block has grown autonomously, and is self- determined rather than a response to cultural policy or a public funding strategy. Populated by artists in empty offices left by the 2009 recession, now

threatened with certain eviction and demolition. Nevertheless, EPSB demonstrated a perpetually evolving character that was dynamic and shifting, from agricultural to industrial and now creative uses. Being present in spaces scheduled for demolition in the near future offered unique insight and access into a short-lived disruption of Newcastle's urban fabric.

Understanding the 'particular' in this sense involves "thinking-with" rather than "thinking-on" participants. This involves "hanging out more…getting to know them as people" (Walmsley 2016:15). Therefore, the aim of this research is to give a rich account of artists' experiences of place through being and becoming a resident in interstitial space. Arts Council England (ACE) acknowledged the need for such research writing that,

> "Better understanding of artists' individual trajectories, of their economic and social status and rights, and of the factors that sustain or place constraints on their development would be an interesting theme for future research. Much research effort focuses on arts and cultural organisations and on people engaging with the arts; less considers the artists' experiences of what can help them thrive."
>
> (Arts Council England 2014:43 Emphasis Added)

The importance of contextual factors in arts research cannot be overstated: artistic practices are always situated and embedded. However, by focusing our attention, and research on arts and cultural organisations we reinforce the idea that art is something that should be housed in (often-funded) purposive buildings. The artist's lifeworld is imbued with experiences, histories and beliefs. Part of that lifeworld is the place artists reside in. I also wanted to consider, not only the artists themselves, but the places they make for themselves, both spatially and socially. The other section I have underlined in the quotation is the word "trajectory". Through the constant flux of funding, labour

and urban planning contemporary art practices are increasingly held in tension by the dual desire for mobility and attachment to place. This tension is interesting, and worthy of further academic attention.

## 1.3 Background to the research and Positionality

The research aims and objectives of this thesis differ dramatically from those in my original research proposal. In it, I state that,

> "the specific aim of this research is to move beyond simply economic impacts in order to investigate and better understand the complex and comprehensive set of benefits and possible disadvantages of creative placemaking in the regeneration of cities."

(R Prescott Project Approval January 2015)

What began as an exploration of culture-led regeneration in its broadest sense changed dramatically at the scoping stage of my research. This is a significant departure from my aims at the outset. Therefore, I would like to outline the decisions that led to this revision, including my own 'route' into the research and the findings that prompted such changes.

My route began when working, after an MA in Arts, Culture and Business at Newcastle University. Following several years practicing as an artist, my MA provided the opportunity to combine my practice with business methods - the combination, I thought, of two distinct spaces. This led me to work within the budding spaces of East Pilgrim Street Block (EPSB). Intrigued, I proposed the original research project and began to map out an investigation of artistic practice within interstitial

space. My aims here were twofold. Firstly, I selected artist-run organisations as the focus of the study as they were often occluded in literature concerning artistic production. In this, I thought that the study could offer significant insight into grassroots artistic practice in urban space. In addition, I hoped to use my findings to impact more normative understandings of the role of art within urban regeneration. I wanted to move away from generalizing the different practices, materialities and infrastructures that characterize these spaces. Furthermore, I want to create research that is attentive to the informal and precarious set of embodied practices that these spaces engender. The aim is to give a rich account of artists' experiences of place in all its messiness and complexity.

## 1.4 Explanation of key terms

Throughout the thesis, I refer to the 'residents' of the East Pilgrim Street Block rather than 'artists'. This is in recognition of the diversity of practice I encountered, and its inability to be neatly categorised. I felt it would be overwhelming to refer to each individual by his or her practice. Furthermore, I viewed their practice as being inherently tied up to their location. I wanted to convey the interrelationship between the physical location (the city space) and the people within it.

In relation to this thesis I use the word institution to refer to formalised space, funded by a government organisation, typified by a certain form of artistic practice, usually commercial, geographically rooted, usually owned by its occupiers. Alternatively, interstitial, in relation to this research, is a specific form of urban space, formed out of

disuse and disinvestment. It is a space that intervenes between one thing and another, growing in the cracks of the city.

I use the DCMS definition of the Creative and Cultural industries which identifies "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS 2001:4). As with most research in the creative industries, things are not easily classified, however this working definition is an attempt to illuminate the research.. It is not as simple as institutional vs interstitial– more an inter-dependent sector made of alliances, connections that weave tighter or looser depending on external factors such as practice, projects or funding.

## 1.5 Contribution to knowledge

The relationship between art and space is continually evolving within varying disciples and conceptual frameworks. Amongst these, this thesis stands as a major contribution to organisation and urban studies and to academics working at the intersection of arts, regeneration, organisation and the urban. In addition, as a response to the lack of a specific descriptor for artistic interventions in urban space I have introduced the concept of the interstitial. This is used both as a physical aspect of urban planning, but also a conceptual tool to think about the relationship between self and place, whilst remaining attentive to particular differences and tensions.

In doing so I have drawn attention to the way in which participatory and reflexive research can extend our understanding of empathy in arts and urban research - embracing subjectivity rather than discouraging it. I argue that a renewed focus on the

*process* of spatial creation rather than the end product is vital in helping to us to be 'present' as events unfold, to witness first-hand when, why and how multiple materialities and relations come together to form space. In the narrow focus on the 'built' environment, we miss the numerous urban spaces that are quietly and incrementally in the process of becoming.

This thesis has demonstrated that EPSB and, by extension, interstitial spaces have a value in and of themselves. This value is tied to the interstitial's ability to disrupt normative ideas about what constitutes artistic labour. Interstitial space produces and supports a unique form of artistic practice that is short-term, networked and event-led. Interstitial space also disrupts our understanding of artistic identities. Identities within the space were complex, multiple and fluid. There was no 'typical' resident; EPSB facilitated a diversity of practice that did not encourage neat categorisation.

I argue that interstitial space has unique effects on the artistic body. An increasingly precarious lifeworld means negotiating continually fluctuating temperatures, wages and working practices. In this, I demonstrate that there is a distinction between artistic precariousness and the Precariat (Standing 2011). Whilst the Precariat are a distinct social class, dependent on circumstances beyond their control, with identities and lives made up of disjointed bits (Standing 2011) residents of EPSB accepted and understood their position from the outset. These spaces socialise artists to seek non-financial rewards – peer recognition and personal satisfaction. Precariousness is therefore socially reproduced and socially accepted.

This thesis revealed two separate responses to the residents' relocation following demolition, which can be categorised as either fight or flight. The fight group attempted to contest displacement, anatomising a desire for permanence and

recognition. The second accepted their relocation as an inevitable end to a residency structured around the whims of property development. Both groups were combined in their ability to reframe this interstitial praxis as 'practice'. As the redevelopment of the block began to erase their presence from the city, they focused on their legacy – the continuation of their inventive, fluid and imaginative practice removed, this time, from the interstice.

My thesis demonstrated that EPSB represented a unique spatial moment, engendering a precarious form of inhabiting the city, an informal set of artistic practices and a makeshift approach to building space. Yet tension arises when these moments are used to drive lasting change. I argue that the Creative City script requires, at least, a substantial re-write. The Creative City script simplifies complex urban spaces and closes down possibility. We must explore forms of regeneration that keep cities complex, but incomplete. The gap between the lived city and the city that exists in our imaginations is immense; yet this thesis demonstrates that the inventive artistic practice that thrives in the interstices could, and should form the connective tissue between the two.

## 1.6 Structure of the thesis

This opening chapter has outlined the relationship between art and space and its interrelationship with urban regeneration. In this chapter, I have drawn out key areas this research seeks to explore, alongside the justification for research, research evolution and location.

The second chapter concerns the literature review and conceptual approach of the thesis. In this, it provides a more detailed justification for the research and the overall aims and objectives. The chapter explores the literature on both artistic practice, its definitions and how it has been subject to the flux of economic forces, urban planning and policy agendas. I have also explored the interrelation between the artworld, the creative industries and the Creative City script with the aim of contextualising artistic practice within the theoretical and physical 'spaces' in which they operate.

The third chapter focuses on the methodological approach to the research utilising an ethnography focused around Participant Observation (PO). This is informed by a sensitivity to Hermeneutic Phenomenology (HP). The chapter also provides greater detail on the sites of research as well as methods of data gathering, analysis and a consideration of both reflexivity and positionality.

Chapters four, five and six form the core empirical work of the thesis. They are organised around three key themes arising from the literature review. Firstly, the process of spatial creation within interstitial space: how residents of EPSB imagine, transform and negotiate space. Secondly, the forms of artistic practice EPSB engendered and the effects on this practice of an increasingly precarious lifeworld. Finally, I wanted to expand the research beyond the built environment of EPSB to explore how these interstitial spaces fit within popular narratives of culture-led regeneration and the Creative City.

Chapter seven completes the thesis with an in-depth discussion of my findings, alongside recommendations for future research.

# Chapter Two

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Locating Artistic Practice

Artists and artmaking remain vital to academic study as they represent literal, practical examples of the hybrid and complex relationships between production and consumption, the symbolic and the material (Pratt 2008). Artmaking critiques the notion that objects themselves are incapable of agency, recognising that "the artwork is one of the actors involved in the drama of its own making" (Becker et. al 2006:3-4). This is not to argue that artworks act intentionally, but that as 'real' objects they have the ability to influence action. Indeed as Becker (1974) notes, art imposes constraints on what others, including the artist, or artists who are constructing it, can do. Therefore, the artwork is the body mediated. Because of this, we must pay particular attention to the way in which artworks shape meaning and understanding.

This is also true of the capacity of other 'objects' to form meaning. We might look past the artwork onto other 'objects', onto how the built environment shapes, or constrains artmaking. Differing spatial attributes 'regulate by circumstance' (Whitehead 2009:40). This is not to say that this thesis is solely focused on the material aspects of artistic production. Rather, there remains a need to renegotiate a more nuanced and complex relationship between the two.

The relationality between self and space, and their construction through social processes is instrumental in guiding this research. I want to add to this through a focus on urban environments. Relations between artistic practice and the urban is nothing

new – Manet, Seurat and Rodin amongst others attempted to grasp the experience of living and working within cities. What is new is the particular urban experience that comes from existence in the interstice. I am interested in the spatial experience of living on the threshold, and in the margins between formal and informal interventions in urban space and artistic creation. Current research has not yet formulated a specific descriptor for artistic interventions in urban space, one that is attentive to the multiple diverse practices yet succinctly surmises the phenomena. As a response to this, I have introduced the concept of the interstitial as a physical aspect of urban planning, but also a conceptual tool to think about the relationship between self/art and place.

Paradoxically a vital component of looking meaningfully at the future of urban research is looking backwards. Every mark on the landscape is the product of its own history. I have drawn from Heidegger's (1977) notion of dwelling in order to produce research that is attentive to the experience of 'being-in-the-world'. In addition, I use Lefebvre's work as a starting point for investigating interstitial space because of his strategic decision to theorise social space as a relationship between various practices of spatial production. In this, there is a sensitivity and openness to forms of space outside of traditional urban typologies. This section aims to use these concepts in relation to the thesis subject, context and justification rather than as a critique of the concepts themselves to the view of reconceptualisation. Indeed, a great strength of Lefebvre's conceptualisation is its inchoateness. In this way, he leaves a gap for us to explore, the ability to develop the theory beyond its initial boundaries, producing research that is more empirically focused, and interdisciplinary.

Using the interstitial as a lens, this chapter will explore the literature and definitions surrounding artistic practice and its interrelationship with urban space. Therefore, the aim is to ground the empirical work in ongoing academic discourses and debate. This chapter opens with a wider exploration of artistic identity before moving on to a discussion of the 'spaces' – both theoretical and real – of artistic production. It concludes with a consideration of how and why artists relocate.

### 2.1.1 Locating 'Artist': Fractures and Flux in Artistic Identity

To begin this chapter I want to examine the literature further drawing out key issues surrounding artistic practice, its many forms, practices and professions. What do we understand from the term 'artist' and artistic identity and how does this relate to the manifold narratives of spatial production? In answering these questions, the aim is to unpack some of the particular tensions and idiosyncrasies of artistic labour within interstitial space.

First and foremost, art is an embodied practice. That is, the production of an artwork is the output of complete bodily expression. Art is the body mediated through the canvas, the screen or the melody; "every technique is a technique of the body, illustrating and amplifying the metaphysical structure of our flesh" (Merleau-Ponty 1964:2). Like a musician playing an instrument, the output is an analogue of the conscious and unconscious physicality of movement combined with intention, emotional state and environment (context) at a particular time. In this way, we can regard art, and being an artist as a verb rather than a noun – it is less about the physical art rather the process of production. This fluidity makes room for diverse and differing identities that are never fixed but concerned more with 'becoming'. It is emergent,

recognising the plurality of an identity that encompasses disparate roles, practices, products and methods.

In English, we speak of ‘forging’ an identity, as if identity were formed from iron – immovable, unrelenting and unyielding to the flux of external forces. Perhaps ‘carving’ or ‘moulding’ would be more appropriate synonyms for artistic identity, both being tied to a creative act and actively *constructed.* Disparate and contradicting assumptions about creativity play a significant role in how artistic identity is constructed both in the self and in the public imagination. Indeed, creativity itself remains a highly contested concept. For Negus and Pickering (2000:259) the term is “one of the most used, and abused, terms in the modern lexicon. It comes laden with a host of meanings, connotations, and applications which are regularly imported into a range of varying discourses, institutions and settings.” This particular tension between creativity and artistic labour continues. German artist, Joseph Beuys once proclaimed, “Everyone is an Artist” (Beuys in Adams 1992:30). This was not meant to suggest that all people should or could be creators of traditional artworks. Rather, that we should not see creativity as the special realm of artists, but that everyone should apply creative thinking in their own area of specialisation - whether law, agriculture, engineering, education, or the fine arts. Richard Florida (2002) internalised this in his Creative Class thesis. His ‘creative workers’ are composed of scientists and engineers, academics, architects, as well as "people in design, education, arts, music and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or creative content” (Florida 2002:8). This definition remains too broad and ill-defined for application in this research, being based on a false analogy between ‘creative’ and ‘artistic’ labour. All people can be creative, but not all creative

people are artists. Indeed, most sectors of the economy could reasonably claim to be creating new ideas or technology or producing what could be deemed 'creative' content. Furthermore, this definition obscures some of the idiosyncrasies of artistic labour, which I will draw out over the proceeding section.

The current focus locates 'artist' as a person engaged in an occupation whose primary purpose is the creation or performance of *artistic works* such as designs, films, illustrations, music, performances or literature (DCMS 2001, Howkins 2002, Hesmondhalgh 2013). However succinct this definition appears, it is the result of a shifting collective understanding of who an artist is, what they do, where they do it and to what degree of professionalism. Examining how this has changed and developed provides an insight into the particular difficulties of relying on artistic labour to convey socio-economic value, a concept that has gained traction within the fields of urban studies, regeneration and policy.

#### 2.1.1.1 The Artist as Entrepreneur

Historically, Art was a calling and artists called to the profession because of extraordinary talents (Bain 2005; Menger 1989). The artist was 'other' working outside the realm of conventional society and rejecting the quotidian. This myth of the artistic outsider prevails; as Wittkower and Wittkower (2006) write "the 'otherness of artists is widely accepted by the general public … there is almost unanimous belief that artists are, and always have been, egocentric, temperamental, neurotic, rebellious, unreliable, licentious, extravagant, obsessed with their work and altogether difficult to live with" (Wittkower and Wittkower 2006:68). The 'starving artist' or 'bohemian rebel' (Bain 2005) embodied the supposed freedom of expression and creativity.

However, “the old tent poles of this identity are strained by structural changes in not only the art world and the economy but also by new artistic practices and contexts that challenge traditional notions of who an artist is and what an artist does” (Lingo and Tepper 2013:352). By extension, these changes in the who and the what of artistic practice have instigated a spatial shift that challenges traditional notions of *where* an artist works.

There has been the tendency of commentators to romanticise artistic practice as a fulfilling ‘indie’ alternative to more conventional forms of employment, or even a conscious act of resistance and search for authenticity (Jakob 2013). However, a review of the literature reveals two powerful, competing narratives that move away from this romanticised, idealised version of artistic practice. The first of these is an inherent individualisation of career by neoliberal mechanisms. For prior researchers, a powerful meta-narrative of neoliberalisation currently dictates artistic labour (Bain and McLean 2013; Jelinek 2013). This chimes with the Bourdieusian definition of neoliberalism as,

> “a program for destroying collective structures that may impede pure market logic – the nation, whose space to manoeuvre continually decreases; work groups, for example through the individualisation of salaries and of careers as a function of individual competencies”
>
> (Bourdieu 1998).

At odds with the ‘collective orientated practice’ proposed by Grimes and Lingo (2013), this notion stresses individual agency and personal responsibility that ties to the current reinvention of artistic practice as an entrepreneurial undertaking.

This increasingly entrepreneurial narrative has seen the reframing of artistic identity and production. Now, if "art is a business and must be approached as any other capitalistic enterprise" (Kelly 1974:138) then artists are presented as creative entrepreneurs possessing a strong personal compass of what helps them operate, what skills they possess and what projects will best sustain their career (Gruber 1988). Lingo and Tepper (2013) argued that "the post-fordist economy cedes a great deal of control to those who work as freelancers" (Lingo and Tepper 2013:345). No longer is the artist a poor salesman, absorbed in doing something well, unable to explain the value of what he or she is doing" (Sennett 2008:117). Framed in this way, artists hold positions of power through their ability to directly engage with the market, albeit a highly volatile, competitive one.

In reality, a powerful discourse of professionalism has developed as a result of an analogy between the desire for legitimacy and expected demands of an oversaturated labour market. Entrepreneurialism in this context is seen as a shift from rebellious creativity towards a focus on professionalism, expertise and technique. Therefore, the notably competitive nature of artistic labour markets rewards those who are able to differentiate themselves and their work, and market themselves based on being the most talented and experienced (Caves, 2002; Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Menger, 2001). As Bain (2005) writes, "in this market-savvy entrepreneurial role, artists are encouraged to exaggerate and exploit their individuality and to feed into popular myths to reinforce their occupational authenticity" (Bain 2005:29).

Several researchers have tied this focus on professionalism to the "institutionalisation" of artistic practice (Perkin 1989, Lindemann & Tepper 2012). Drawing attention to the

increasing number of degrees awarded in the visual and performing arts she suggests accreditation provides a means of validation and authenticity; to prove to "society and ultimately the state that his service was vitally important and therefore worthy of guaranteed reward" (Perkin 1989:23). Authenticity becomes increasingly important when separating 'artists' from 'non-artists' is problematic "in a profession where there are no degrees or licenses, prerequisites or credentials to authenticate occupational status" (Bain 2005:26).

Worryingly, this narrative belies an ideology that, similar to Beuys, dictates that everyone is, and can be an artist if you *just buy the right tools.* Indeed, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) noted how capitalism had become 'artistic' and acquired the values intrinsic to art, namely freedom and self-expression. Indeed, several commentators have noted the assimilation of artistic values into popular culture. We think of Florida's (2002) Creative Class - a proposed socio-economic group based around expressing creativity in work and life choices or Brooks' (2000) BoBos (Bourgeois Bohemians) who combine a bohemian ethos with economic conservatism. Brooks writes, "it was now impossible to tell an espresso-sipping artist from a cappuccino-gulping banker" (Brooks 2000:5). In embodying these values, being an artist means engaging with a particular lifestyle or ethos as much as physically producing work; one that is focused on consumption as much as artistic production. Again, these theories place too much emphasis on an incomplete and idealized notion of creativity. Additionally, they stress the individual as the sole producer of artistic work practice while neglecting the inherent collectivity in artistic practice. As Negus and Pickering write "an individual can no more realise the creation and exhibition of a movie than be able to manufacture and make function...a washing machine" (Negus and Pickering

2000:271). The myth of individualistic genius is supplanted with a more collective orientated practice that involves putting forward ideas but synthesising the input of others (Grimes and Lingo 2013).

The overall pattern, many argue, is toward self–awareness; generalisation, flexibility, and broad competencies, rather than discipline-specific skills (Ellmeier, 2003; Iyengar, 2013). This fracturing of artistic identity favours breadth over depth - success increasingly requires meta-competencies such as broad creative skills, commercial acumen, and the ability to work across multiple media platforms (Bain & McLean, 2013; Bridgstock, 2011; Haukka, 2011; McRobbie, 2004b; Mietzner & Kamprath, 2013). Pizanias (1992) used the phrase the "hyphenated artist" to describe a new form of polymorphous creativity and the increasing pervasiveness of the 'multi-platform' artist. Additionally, secondary jobs outside of the sector offer the opportunity for artistic aspirants to develop more diverse skill sets (Throsby & Zednik, 2011). Adler frames this as a "marriage to conventional society" where benefits such as security are offset by "the realisation that one's cohabitant might be disgusted by certain expressions of personal style and could demand conformity to somewhat alien standards" (Adler 2003:84).

Two contradictory impulses now hold the artist in tension. They must be self-disciplined, rigorous and ascetic in order to ensure they will produce work and work hard. Conversely, they must also be hedonistic, covetous and sybaritic to reinforce their occupational 'authenticity'. The loss of the traditional artist-agent system means they must be self-disciplined to not only produce work, but also to highlight, market

and sell it. At the same time, they must maintain the myth of the lone genius to reinforce their creative individuality in a world where ‘everyone is an artist’.

Gill & Pratt (2008) contend that “Governments see creative workers as ‘model entrepreneurs’ but cultural work often involves long hours with poor pay, informal working environments and the need to socialise with others to build connections” (Gill and Pratt 2008:115). Questions remain over how much of the narrative of artistic entrepreneurialism is rhetoric adopted to contend with the flux of economic forces, urban planning and policy agendas. As Grant and Buckwold (2013) write “precarious employment is a growing concern in this new economy that assiduously celebrates creativity yet relies on low paid service workers for prosperity” (Grant and Buckwold 2013:115). A powerful counter narrative to the supposed empowerment offered by entrepreneurialism emphasises the intrinsic precariousness of this new practice. Artistic practice is reframed in the context of a global ‘precariat’ of contingent freelance workers whose livelihoods are wholly subject to the flux of economic forces (Bain and McLean 2013).

#### 2.1.1.2 The Artist as Precariat

The descriptive term ‘precariat’ was first used by French sociologists in the 1980’s to describe temporary or seasonal workers; a neologism that combined the adjective ‘precarious’ and the related noun ‘proletariat’. Mapping this phenomenon onto current events, Guy Standing in his seminal work ‘The Precariat’ (2011) described how the term has changed. In response to the stagnant growth that beset the economies of several industrialised nations by the mid 1970’s, organisations restructured their operations and pressed for deregulatory policies that would enable them to shed or

bypass their obligations to workers and lower labour costs. The implementation of contingent labour meant implementing flexi-time, outsourcing workers and introducing new methods of sub-contracting and freelancing (Standing 2011).

In this way, the entrepreneurial narrative is reframed as an agenda for transferring risk and insecurity on to workers. Practically, this means a reduction in the degree to which there is certainty over continuing employment, the degree of regulatory protection as well as a reduction in control over the labour process, and income level (Cranford et al 2003). Although the precariat has similar circumstances, they are in no way a homogenous group inclined to collective action through shared experience. Standing (2011) succinctly sums up what this means in practical terms:

> "The precariat does not feel part of a solidaristic labour community. This intensifies a sense of alienation and instrumentality on what they have to do. Actions and attitudes, derived from precariousness, drift towards opportunism. There is no 'shadow of the future' hanging over their actions, to give them a sense of what they say, or feel today will have a strong or binding effect on their longer-term relationships. To be 'out' tomorrow would come as no surprise, and to leave might not be bad, if another job or burst of activity beckoned"
>
> (Standing 2011:12).

This excerpt remains important for the way it helps in understanding current artistic identity and practice. The myth of the individualistic artistic genius has been co-opted as a rationale for increased focus on personal responsibility masking ever-increasing state funding cuts. The key characteristic is flexibility: for wages, employment, work as well as skills.

Simone (2004) has shown that precarity can represent an opportunity for translating the experience into a site of power, of questioning assumed norms about autonomy

and freedom in artistic labour and practice. Workers in artistic and design related professions have always been and continue to be subject to and adaptable to high levels of flexibility, precariousness and risk (Vinodrai 2013). Their practice stresses individual responsibility, for finding and keeping work but also for training. Indeed, several commentators argue that becoming an artist is based on the lure of an autonomous lifestyle and freedom combined with a chronic underestimation of the risks involved and the chances of success (Alper and Wassall, 2006; Menger, 1999; Neff, Wissinger and Zukin, 2005; Throsby, 1992). As Lingo and Tepper (2013) write, artistic practice involves engaging with a profession with, "oversupply of aspirants, a predominance of project-based work, widely uneven rewards and rampant unpredictability where all hits are flukes" (Lingo and Tepper 2013: 340).

What previous research does not address in detail is how much of this 'flexibility' is based on individual motivation or pre-determined by external factors. There is also the question of attachment, to both work and to place. Whilst short-term projects may engender a sense of urgency that aids productivity, questions remain over the long-term momentum and benefits to both workers and wider society. This attachment to place, both physically and theoretically, is crucial to this thesis and is discussed further in the proceeding chapter.

For Butler (2006) such precariousness must be seen as an ontological condition that characterises every embodied and finite human being. Protean careers involve the constant reinvention of the self (Hall 2004) yet reinvention requires a stable, core artistic identity. This is difficult when artistic labour, despite its apparent recent empowerment through entrepreneurialism, is seldom recognised as 'real' work (Bain

2005). Furthermore, it is difficult to maintain a stable, core artistic identity when economic realities force artists into secondary work outside of the sector. Through portfolio work and constant precariousness it can be seen to be beneficial to think of identities in the plural; 'to keep each current identity temporary, to embrace it lightly, to make sure that it will fall away once the arms are open to embrace its new, brighter, or just untested replacement" (Bauman 2005:28). This plurality demonstrates how artistic identity is subject to flux. Artists are neither wholly model entrepreneurs nor precarious workers. The two are not mutually exclusive; rather form a spectrum of activity.

### 2.1.2 Art Spaces

I now move beyond artistic practice to a consideration of how this has been spatialised. The aim is to contextualise artistic identity, demonstrating how it has been subject to flux, both legitimated and de-legitimated by social mechanisms. These spaces are not 'neutral' but actively involved in the production and positioning of art. Following Lefebvre, I want to encourage the notion that space is not a neutral container or pre-existent stage, but as something (re)produced through social processes (Lefebvre 1991b). In this we can consider what 'forces' act upon the body – other actors, the artworld, the market and urban policy hold the artist in tension in a series of heterogeneous relationships. In examining these tensions, I aim to explore how place and agency intertwine and recreate each other through the processes by which artists define, inhabit, manipulate, dominate and eventually vacate space.

Prior research locates artistic practice within three distinct 'spaces' – the artworld, the creative industries and the phenomena known as the Creative City. This can be represented in the following diagram,

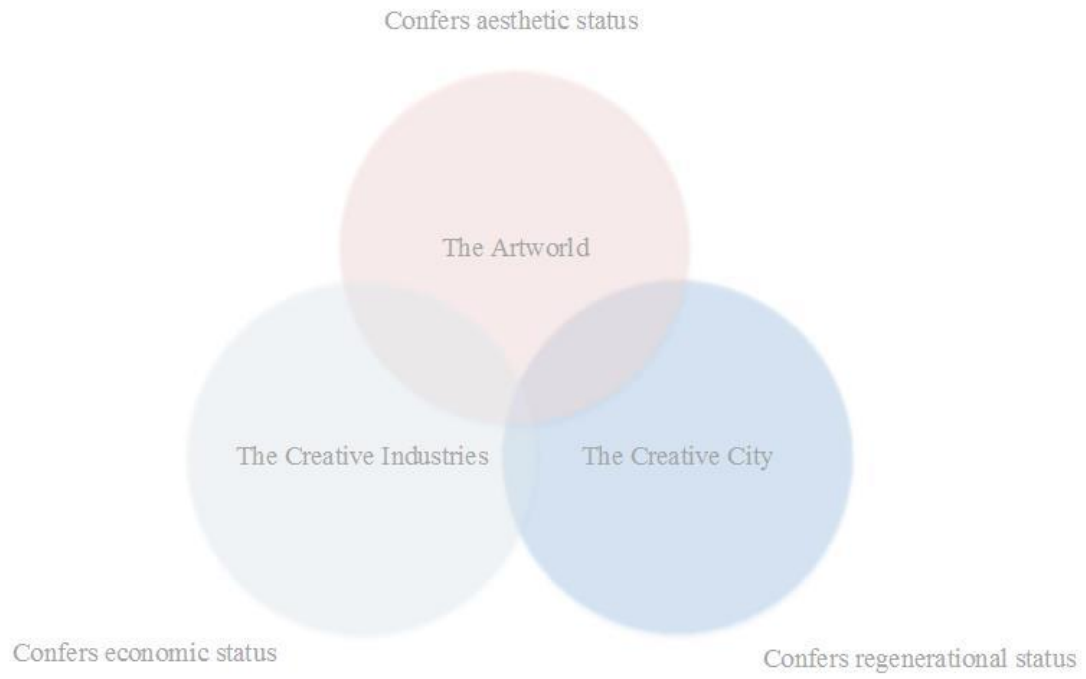


*Figure 1: The spaces of artistic practice*

Each space is social, reflected in a multitude of heterogeneous connections that serve to reinforce each other, specific languages and characteristics. They are also spatial, physically present in the network of structures (schools, museums, galleries, universities) and urban environments. My goal in intersecting and juxtaposing these diverse perspectives on the topic is to create a form of rudimentary Venn diagram exploring the connection between the life worlds of artists and the social and spatial worlds they construct. In addition, by overlapping these conversations I hope to situate the notion of interstitial space within wider narratives. Drawing from both the obvious and the more hidden places in which these conversations have developed I have attempted to describe and interpret the range of competing and often conflicting narratives that connect artistic practice and space.

#### 2.1.2.1 The Artworld

In conceptual terms, art making is a performative act between artists, their work, patrons, buyers, commissioners, educators, historians and critics that perceptibly form and reform the definition of 'art'. Beuys's maxim 'everyone is an artist' (Beuys quoted in Adams 1992:30) remains pervasive, prompting the natural assumption, that art is 'anything defined as art'. Whilst I admire the democratic and anti-elitist implications of this notion, "to see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry – an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld" (Danto 1964:573).

Dickie's (1997) institutional definition of art emphasises the role of social processes operating in defining something as 'art'. He concludes that:

- An artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art.
- A work of art is an artefact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.
- A public is a set of persons the members of which are prepared in some way to understand an object that is presented to them.
- The artworld is the totality of all artworld systems
- An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public.
- The consequence being that whatever the artworld says is art *is* art. There is no other criteria other than the consensus of the artworld.

(Dickie 1997:80-2)

This conceptualisation demonstrates how the definition of art is conferred through the collective consensus of people within the artworld. This performative act of bestowing status is normalised through repetition. Therefore, the very definition of art must be considered a social process.

For Becker (2008 [1982) artworks are not the "products of individual makers, 'artists' who possess a rare and special gift" (Becker 2008 [1982:35). Rather, his 'interactionist' account argues that,

> "people do not respond automatically to mysterious external forces surrounding them. Instead they develop their lines of activity gradually, seeing how others respond to what they do and adjusting what they will do next in a way that meshes with what others have done and will probably do next"
>
> Becker 2008[1982]:375

For Becker (2008) the artist is not a mythic genius, and the artworld is not a mysterious force. Rather, art is a form of collective and collaborative action that focuses on "real people who are trying to get things done" as "observable in social life" (Becker 1982:377-379). I draw attention to Becker's work for two reasons; the first is his focus on the everyday-ness of artmaking. At once removed from the extraordinary product of artmaking, the *process*, as Becker notes, has more to do with the mundane than the moving.

Secondly, the focus on the collective nature of art making, and the way in which artmaking is spatialised through peer networks. The artworld in this sense can be understood as a socio-economic network that functions to continually to define, validate, maintain, and reproduce the definition of art, and to produce the consent of the entire society in the legitimacy of the artworld's authority to do so (Irvine 2013). They do not necessarily need to know they are participating in the artworld to be carrying out its functions, but like all networks, it has externalities that create

incentives to be connected, especially when constant self-promotion and knowledge gained through informal meetings are necessary components of working in the sector. Artworks are the solidification of these social processes that produce art and a solidification of a particular space/time. In this way, what counts as legitimate or 'valuable' art practice is specific to its location in both time and space, and its position in the network.

This artworld is spatialised through a network of institutions (schools, museums, galleries, universities) that confer value through accreditation and exhibition. These 'nodes' act independently but also collectively - the act of sharing works between museums and galleries for temporary displays act as a global, international artworld; a network for conveying value removed from the specificities of place. Therefore, whilst the human, social and cultural capital of art is ultimately rooted in place (Pinheiro and Dowd 2009), engaging with the arts market takes both the art and artists from the local, engendering consumption on a global scale.

That is not to argue that the specificities of place do not matter. Bourdieu (1993), Becker (1982), Danto (1964) and Dickie (1997) have argued for definitions of art that centre around their spatial context. As Becker (1982) writes, "when a museum shows and purchases a work, it gives it the highest kind of institutional approval available in the contemporary visual arts world" (Becker 1982:117). Therefore, museums and, by extension, art institutions are not 'neutral' spaces. They are actively involved in the production and positioning of art. Whilst this body of work creates a clear link between the social and spatial, what is lacking in this conversation is an appreciation of those spaces outside of this formal framework. The artworld is not brought into being and

mediated solely through the museum or the gallery. Therefore, any study must draw attention to the interstitial spaces that grow in the cracks between the institutional.

#### 2.1.2.2 The Creative Industries

The second 'space' I want to explore is the Creative Industries. In an attempt to skirt the endless debate on the evolution and constant shift in disciplinary boundaries, it is best to clarify that when I speak of the creative or cultural industries I refer to, "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS 2001:4). This is not to appear to be generalising, rather a recognition that the terms 'creative' and 'cultural' remain highly contested. As William's bemoans, the term 'culture' is "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams 1983:87). It is a term unbound to any one discipline, used interchangeably, embracing a range of processes and meanings.

With the advent of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in 1997, shortly after the New Labour landslide, artistic practice was recast as an asset of the new knowledge-based economy. Positioned as able to play a major function in economic development, individual creativity is redefined through its supposed positive association with economic innovation and competitiveness (Oakley 2004, Pratt 2008b). The creative industries encompassed advertising, architecture, art, antiques, crafts, design, fashion, film and video, computer games, music, performing arts, publishing, software and computer services, TV and radio (DCMS 2001). Within the creative industries the economic value of a product is dependent upon its 'cultural value', however this cultural value embodies a whole set of notions – informal,

intuitive and sometimes emotional – that are difficult to define or codify (Banks et al., 2000).

Creativity is now reframed as an industry; resting on the belief that the UK's economic future lay with the evolution of an increasingly knowledge-based economy, involving "higher learning and education levels, qualifications (that help to ensure labour mobility) and flexible working, many of which were exemplified in the work patterns already evident in the creative industries" (Oakley 2004:70). In this reframing, the worlds of the arts and business developed a new symbiotic relationship, distinct from the traditional models of patronage that is dually pedagogic. The artist becomes professional, shifting from rebellious creativity towards a focus on professionalism, expertise and technique (Bain 2005). Meanwhile, the professional become artistic. Siegelbaum (2013) notes the overlap between art making and other forms of labour within neoliberal capitalism, namely the re-alignment of work to cease producing objects and instead engage in providing training or services. He goes on to note that

> "as artistic activity today consists of various projects and the paragon of the contemporary artist has become a networked, globetrotting nomad, it has become all the more attractive as a model for the new manager or consultant no longer bound by the constraints of rational planning, company hierarchies or standardised procedures"
>
> (Siegelbaum 2013:61)

Artistic practice therefore, ""constitutes the limit ... towards which the ideal of the manager seems to be headed" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005:312). They continue, "is not the neo-manager, like the artist, a creative figure, a person of intuition, invention, contacts, chance encounters, someone who is always on the move, passing from one project to the next, one world to another?" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005:312).

The effects of pollution, massive unemployment, rising house and rental prices: if Le Corbusier (1933) lamented how 'the world is sick' then culture, in the eyes of policy makers, is the means of addressing place based socio-economic 'ills' (Pugalis 2011). In this way, artists and the spaces they inhabit have been reframed as agents of urban change. Recent political and economic shifts have made perceptible changes to the way cities utilise culture and creativity as factors for local economic development (Power & Scott 2004; Ginsburg and Throsby 2006) from aiding urban planning (Leslie 2005) to local regeneration and entrepreneurship (Lazzeretti et. al 2008). This next section moves to a discussion of the varying ways artists, and 'culture' have been seen to effect urban space and the rationale behind certain initiatives. Through this it explores how artistic identity translates onto urban space - is the city only for toil, trade and traffic or can it be re-imagined as a place of artistic invention?

#### 2.1.2.3 The Creative City Script

There is a new symbiotic relationship between the arts and wider economy seen in the development and constant deification of the creative industries as a driver of economic development. This new relationship is reflected in the increasing appeal to an 'aesthetic' dimension of life in mainstream urban policy. Several commentators have noted the 'aestheticisation of everyday life' (Cova & Svanfeldt 1993, Vickery 2007). As Vickery (2007) notes, there appears to be a "bifurcation of the language of 'aesthetic' and 'artistic value': one trajectory remains within the hermetic world of 'the arts' and with its own historical and philosophical traditions: the other trajectory heads into a direct engagement with the socio-urban context" (Vickery 2007:17). Concepts such as 'quality of life', 'well-being' and 'urban renaissance' reflect what has been deemed the 'experiential turn' in urban planning. This experiential turn was

designed to acknowledge the non-visible and unquantifiable aspects of existence, and design urban space that produces, "not just a sensory 'happiness' but a state where the citizen is optimizing their individual potential in an environment that is stable, just, secure and will continue" (Vickery 2007:9). This thinking is broadly organised under the term, 'the Creative City'. However, when discussing the Creative City in any form conceptual categorisation is required. Herein lies the first barrier to any succinct analysis of both the term and the phenomena itself. The discourse surrounding the term is broad and diverse; the term continues to be used in different ways by different authors at different times. Therefore, in this thesis only a summary can be attempted. This is designed to locate the research within both a conceptual and policy context, offering insights into the development and diffusion of the Creative City.

The Creative City aimed to move beyond strict policy categories – 'social', 'cultural' 'urban' towards an integrated understanding of the fluid, dynamic urban environment. There is a symbiotic relationship between culturally animated places and economic vitality (Pugalis 2009:8) Therefore the Creative City is a process of co-creation between these three stakeholders – the artworld, the creative industries and policy makers as well as citizens - which utilises culture to enhance physical infrastructure, improve workforces and allow cities to trade on their social capital (Zukin 1995). This leads primarily from the work of Florida (2002, 2005) but also shares a semantic overlap with the European Initiative Capital of Culture and work by Landry (2000, 2006). Creative City strategy focuses on urban revitalisation formed of large architectural projects and flagship buildings (Bell & Jayne 2004), cultural institutions (Bianchini 1993) spectator events (Garcia 2004a) and the creation of cultural industry clusters (Scott 2000, 2010).

The following diagram aims to provide some conceptual clarification over the multiple terms and strategies employed under the banner of the 'Creative City'. However, it is important to note here that the categories reflect common usage rather than strict definitions. In many academic and applied fields, terminologies continue to be used interchangeably, without consensus, evolving over time as new stakeholders enter the conversation.

*Table 1: [Creative City Conceptualisations]*

| Term | Evidenced By | Rationale |
|---|---|---|
| **Creative Clustering** | Van den berg et al (2000); Drake (2003); Mommaas (2004) | The implicit co-location of creative firms in proximity to make best use of "agglomeration effects" including the sharing of tacit knowledge, facilities and access to networks. |
| **Creative/Cultural Quarter/District:** | Zukin (1995) Frost-Kumpf (1998) Florida (2002) Bell & Jayne (2004) Miles (2005) Santagata (2002) Lazzeretti et al. (2008) | Post-hoc designation to a location rich in creative organisations or arts facilities. This designation adds gravitas – links to place marketing in stressing uniqueness. |
| **Flagship Buildings** | Bianchini & Parkinson (1993) Scalbert (1994) Crawford (2001) Miles (2005) Evans (2005) | The building of architectural set pieces (see Bilbao's Guggenheim) in order to increase local investment and tourism. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Festivals and Events** | Bianchini & Parkinson (1993) Pugalis (2009) | Programmed events and festivals to increase the attractiveness of a city and encourage future investment and tourism. |
| **Creative Placemaking** | Markusen and Gadwa (2010) | Tacit orientation of a location around culture and the arts through involvement from the public, private and non-profit sectors. |

The diagram clarifies the inherent aim behind Creative City strategies. The aim with each is fourfold; firstly, to promote the built environment with the aim of attracting tourism and tourism income, making the city 'well known' or 'attractive' (Bianchini & Parkinson 1993; Paddison 1993). Secondly, to boost economic development, place marketing and place based competition (Florida 2002, 2005). Thirdly, and perhaps more contentiously, is the promotion of social inclusion and betterment through participation in cultural activities (Bianchini & Parkinson 1993). Lastly, promotion and development of the creative industries through increased visibility and engagement (Pratt 2005).

In combining these broad aims policy makers have sought to use culture to re-imagine the 'city as an object of utopian desire, as a distinctive place of belonging within a perpetually shifting spatio-temporal order' (Harvey 2013:17) where social interaction among individuals with diverse interests, opinions and perspectives is encouraged (Young 1990). Within this Creative City, artists are reframed as belonging to a new

‘Creative Class’ which convey spatial value through their symbolic potential in regeneration. This narrative positions artists, and the spaces they inhabit as indicators and drivers of future socio-economic regeneration. Again, as with the development of the creative industries, we see the humanistic valuing of individual creativity redefined in its association with economic innovation and competitiveness.

Within a UK context, the Labour government under Blair transformed the urban landscape between 1998-2002, using culture as a signifier for potential revivification and regeneration. Across the UK, empty industrial buildings became galleries: Manchester Lowry and Tate Liverpool all formed from the residue of regional manufacturing. In Gateshead, over the Tyne River from where this research took place, the Angel of the North, the Sage Gateshead and Baltic gallery spearheaded a broader socio-economic project. This has the dual function of symbolic contribution to a renewed identity and provision of leading cultural facilities.

Using culture as a regenerative tool, policy has moved its focus from places of need to places of opportunity (Pugalis 2011), where the ‘trickle-down effect’ will be most beneficial (Florida 2002). However, some commentators have noted the problematic nature of the Creative City script citing a lack of evidence to support its efficacy in delivering public benefit (Selwood 1995, Peck 2005). The Creative City has been heavily critiqued as being overly concerned with middle class consumption (Harvey 2008; Miles 2007) and urban affluence (Miles 2005). To enable the staging of these carnivalesque cultural events the city has developed increasingly busy, heavily policed, highly programmed ‘festival’ spaces; yet the festivals themselves provide

limited long term economic growth (Quinn 2005) – like Bakhtin's Carnival the city is unchanged the day after the event (Bakhtin 1984).

There is also the question of conflicting agendas as Bassett (1993) writes:

> "Cultural regeneration is more concerned with themes such as self-development and self-expression. Economic regeneration is more concerned with growth and property development…the latter does not necessarily contribute to the former"
>
> (Bassett 1993).

Tension arises when the creative cities thesis, which rests on a series of "elusive intangibles - excitement, attitude, open mindedness and buzz" (Gertner 2004:88) – is translated into practice. This 'literal and metaphorical concretisation' (Peck 2010) is the translation from cultural to economic capital; "A picturesque contrast of glitter against dirt" (Canniffe 2006:167).

For artists "co-opted into the development agenda" (Zukin 1995:22) these spaces offer the provision of "their own facilities of production, distribution and publicity" (Williams 1989:50-1) with the financial backing of local council and philanthropic funding. For local citizens there is the "revalorization" of these arts events and spaces as community building (Peck 2005) through proposed investment and outreach programmes. Yet all these spaces shared the same indicators of co-location, related industries and the ability to share tacit knowledge and trade on human capital through "networks, alliances and embedded systems of social interaction" (Crewe et al 1995:76).

Regarding one aspect of the Creative City, Simmie (2006) notes how "the cluster idea has taken many academics and policy makers by storm. It has become the accepted

wisdom more quickly than and other major idea in the field in recent years…at the expense of previous explanations and lacking in relevant empirical evidence" (Simmie 2006:184). This wide spread adoption without in depth critical analysis could realistically be extended to all aspects of the Creative City. In terms of forming the built environment, "urban regeneration combining culture can result in fragmented and unreal spaces, as well as contested space and culture" (Gdaniec 2000:387). Indeed, the culture of today's cities appears more of a branding and marketing tool wielded by quangos and urban regeneration consultants rather than the organic outcome of any homegrown civic sentiment (Hunt 2004).

If the notion of the Creative City is problematic, even more so is the sense that this can be replicated and developed anywhere without regard for the locality. As Pratt (2010) writes, "the notion of a Creative City has spread like wildfire, but unlike a wildfire, it appears that everyone wants to have a Creative City" (Pratt 2010:14). Indeed, one of the major criticisms of the Creative City script is its lack of place specificity. Oakley (2004) notes how, in comparison to an industrial based economy, where a framework existed for understanding regional idiosyncrasies and to reduce homogeneity, there is little in depth understanding of regional creative economies. Similarly, Evans (2009) notes how "the use of secondary 'evidence' and rationales, in effect, imported as a proxy for endogenous knowledge and resources is a particular effect of this global policy and advocacy movement" (Evans 2009:1006). Cities therefore attempt to replicate a single Creative City model despite evidence that their human capital stock cannot support it. As Scott succinctly surmises, "it is in general not advisable to attempt to become a Silicon Valley when Silicon Valley exists elsewhere" (Scott 2000:27).

Miles (2005) argued that the success of culture in regeneration may depend upon the degree to which these developments "fit in with rather than being foisted upon" a place (Miles 2005:915). Posited as a grassroots alternative to policy led development with the potential to 'fit in' is the development of artist-run initiatives (ARI). In the face of a possible homogenised "blandscape" (Miles 2005:919) and top down planning there has been the temporary, incremental re-appropriation of space by smaller cultural organisations (Tonkiss 2013). Their spatial value for the city is conveyed through their ability to utilise sites left empty by disuse, or disinvestment; their spatial value for artists conveyed through their experimental potential.

### 2.1.3 Artist-Run Spaces

Developing alongside the dominant cultural interventions, there has been the incremental re-appropriation of urban space by smaller, artist-led initiatives. A permissive model of urban planning and policy creates urban spaces more open to the improvised, makeshift spaces in this research. Whilst it does not necessarily facilitate incremental, improvised spatial solutions, it does not exclude them, maintaining a certain tolerance for temporary structures, physical changes and informal economies.

As with the Creative City script, forming a succinct typology of an 'artist-run initiative' is problematic. The literature is loosely organised around the following typologies:

*Table 2: Artist-Run Space Conceptualisations*

| Term | Evidenced By | Rationale |
|---|---|---|
| **Collectives/Co-operatives** | Thompson (2005) Jeffri (1980) | Suggestion that artworks are produced via collective activity. Aligned with a desire for greater control and autonomy. |
| **Makeshift/Meanwhile** | Bain & McLean (2012) Tonkiss (2013) | Geographical terminology used in relation to artistic practice. Co-opting of underused, often urban space for artistic practice. |
| **Grassroots** | Bain & McLean (2012) Hanru (2009) | Relational positioning of artistic practice from the 'ground up'. Positioned as a more democratic structure for artistic practice. |
| **DIY (Do it yourself)**<br><br>**DIO (Do it ourselves)** | Bain & McLean (2013) Daniels (2015) | Associated with auto didacticism or a lack of economic means or a political or philosophical ethos that positions their practice relationally to the cultural mainstream. |
| **Alternative** | Rosati et al. (2012) Ault (2002) Beck (2002) Sharon (1979) | Often affiliated with the 'alternative' spaces founded in 1960's New York. Considered to constitute a sufficient |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | difference from the existing artist/market system. Criticised for inscribing a hierarchical understanding of art production. |

As the table demonstrates, each typology has differences in organisational form, ideology and output. Indeed, the porous definitional boundaries are open to numerous reinterpretations, and misinterpretations. However, the collective term 'artist-run' implies practice that works within, in opposition or in relation to certain 'ideological criteria' (Thompson (2005). More often than not, this practice is considered politically or socially antagonistic, positioning itself against the traditional artist/agent/market relationship. For Bain & McLean (2013) this leads to a sense of ownership over not only artistic work produced, but also the buildings and spaces that constituted their environment. They write:

> "Through collective organising and voluntary reciprocity, artists…have created seemingly ordinary shared space where non-capitalist modes of cultural (re)production explicitly celebrate the creative process and the meditative development of ideas as useful activities in themselves that require no additional economic justification or material end product"
>
> (Bain & McLean 2013:16).

Here we are presented with the notion of value creation through collective practice, rather than in utility or monetary terms. This collective practice, as Bain & McLean underline, serves to draw attention to the ARI's tacit orientation around the *process* of artmaking, as opposed to the material end product. The move from 'art space' to

‘artist-run space’ involves renegotiating ideas around materiality, transience, ownership and economic benefit for both the artist and the city.

The aim in mapping these distinct forms of artist-run initiatives is to firmly plant them within wider spatial narratives. However, I want to move away from unhelpful binaries that position artist-run spaces as valuable only as an alternative to the Creative City script. Indeed, if this review of extant literature has revealed anything, it is the difficulty in finding a succinct typology for the shifting relationship between art and space and the inherent complexity of a phenomenon that resists binary categorisation.

Nevertheless, this mapping has revealed several gaps in current literature concerning artist-run spaces. Firstly, the idealised, often bohemian view they present neglects certain idiosyncrasies of working in urban space. Indeed, whilst current research recognises how artist-run initiatives present a collaborative, process-oriented mode of working, as yet there is little research into the everyday realities of working in often transient, occasionally precarious spaces.

Secondly, a focus on the internal organisational form, ideology and output *only once* the space has been moulded means little exploration of the processes by which artists define, inhabit, manipulate, dominate and eventually vacate space. Artmaking does not happen in a vacuum - how do external factors and individual agency intertwine and interlock (Massey 1999) in the construction and habitation of artist-led spaces? The relationality between arts practice, and the ‘spaces’ of that practice is significant, and worthy of further, in depth academic attention. I want to shift this attention towards a specific form of artistic practice within a specific form of urban space, formed out of disuse and disinvestment. Through this, I aim to reconsider the interrelationship between people and place, artmaking and the spaces of art.

### 2.1.3.1 Artist-Run in Interstitial Space

In exploring the complex relationship between art and, specifically urban, space, this chapter has moved from considering the intricacies of the artworld, the creative industries and the Creative City script towards the multiple forms of artist-run spaces. I now draw heavily from the fields of urban design and geography to explore improvised, interstitial spaces and their interrelation to the artist-run spaces at the heart of this thesis. It begins with contextualising interstitial place and how it fits into wider policy and planning agendas within British cities. It goes on to locate key defining features of these places and how they differ in time, value, and use. This is intended to locate the concept of the interstitial within a wider body of literature.

### 2.1.3.2 Austerity Urbanism – Contextualising Interstitial Space

If for Sassen (1994) cities remained influential only because the movement of capital has to be done *somewhere*, for Tonkiss (2013) cities are framed as "key sites for the production of the crisis" and "key targets for a punitive politics of austerity" (Tonkiss 2013:312). Austerity politics seen in this context involves the funding cuts and closures, in conjunction with private exclusions that encroach on the cities spaces, resources and services that are held in common.

The leading myth remains that the only possibilities for neighbourhoods in austerity are gentrification or urban decay. However, this research is more concerned with more independent and collective acts of small-scale intervention in urban space; not just what is formally commissioned, licensed and funded. This is to move away from the

image of the city as a collection of highly managed, highly secure, privatised spaces (Jacobs 1961, Zukin 1995, Sorkin 1992, Schmidt & Ne'Meth 2010). Rather, investigating "practical interventions in the derelict or disregarded spaces; temporary designs and colloquial uses that remake space in provisional or rigged up ways" (Tonkiss 2013:312). Here, space is never closed, or fixed, "there are always – at any moment in time – connections yet to be made, juxtapositions yet to flower into interaction...relations which may or may not be accomplished" (Massey 1999:28). Building on Deleuze and Guttari's notion of 'agencement' – the alignment of different elements - that orients the researcher to a space that is always in a state of 'becoming'; it takes on new shapes and new identities, it is always emergent.

This process of 'becoming' means engaging with a certain degree of uncertainty as to what form these spaces might take (Murdoch 2006). I want to move away from the space of town planners and regeneration consultants to consider the types of practice that exist in the 'fissures' or 'gaps' between formalised space. The idea of symbiosis, of how, as Ingold writes, people and their environments are continually, "bringing each other into being" (Ingold 2011:20) led to the exploration the idea of *interstitial spaces*.

An interstitial space is located within interstices; it is an intervening space, an interval between uniform, planned space. We see it in the often temporary, incremental reclamation of derelict or disregarded urban space by smaller cultural organisations and individuals. I have chosen to extend the metaphor of the interstitial rather than use 'meantime' or 'makeshift' for two reasons. Firstly, the co-opting of both 'makeshift' and 'meanwhile' by commercial companies looking for temporary residents to "keep land hot whilst prices are low" (Tonkiss 2013). In comparison, interstitial space is characterised by its ability to work both with, and in opposition to the city and its urban

planning. Offering an alternative to the clean Creative City script, interstitial space, "disrupts the flattering, aestheticized, efficient image the city has of itself, but not from an external point of view – such a competing image of the city or an alternative program" (Le Strat 2007). Framed in this way interstitial space is about operating in the cracks between formal planning, speculative investment and local possibilities (Hodkinson 2012) and "finding the weaknesses, the joins, the blindspots and inconsistencies in a given strategy or settlement and working both against and within them" (Tonkiss 2013:316).

Secondly, the biological etymology of the word 'interstitial' reflects the current claims that the city is analogous to an organism or ecology. Describing it as such suggests certain characteristics; inherent fragility and interdependence (Giannachi and Stewart 2005; Walmsley 2016) but also a fluidity that continually reshapes the way in which people, materials, ideas and resources come together. If the city is an organism (Lynch 1984, Landry 2008) then interstitial places are the connective tissues between imagination and agency allowing for inventive urban practice. Interventions in urban space can never be seen as acts of tabula rasa (Deslandes 2013), rather heterogeneous and diverse, messy and vital.

Finally, this conceptualisation stresses the human agency in creating urban space. The interstitial does not exist independently – it is 'bought into being' – "realized and modulated according to the (lived, perceived) intensity of its creations and experiments" (Le Strat 2007). It is a relational space created out of co-operations and alliances among participants (Le Strat 2007).Within a wider urban context, interstitial spaces are the result of reducing formality over urban design and control of space. This form of interstitial space is a particular feature of city planning seen in the cities at the "leading and bleeding edge" (Peck 2012) of austerity politics. A permissive model of

urban planning and policy creates urban spaces more open to the improvised, makeshift spaces in this research. Whilst it does not necessarily facilitate incremental, improvised spatial solutions, it does not exclude them, maintaining a certain tolerance for temporary structures, physical changes and informal economies.

The next section is an attempt to draw out particular characteristics of interstitial space. This will address how interstitial spaces differ from conventional urban planning in both time and usage.

### 2.1.3.3 Characteristics of Interstitial Spaces: Differences in Time

The first characteristic of these spaces is their digression from traditional development timescales. The interstice takes place in a specific period entirely determined by the possibility of regeneration and renewal. Tonnelat (2008) argues this shortened timeframe acts to marginalise both the space and its users. He writes,

> "The terrains show how the planning process and maintenance keep the interstice apart from other more recognized places by defining a specific timeframe within which the land has to be devoid of function and remain visibly empty. This strategy aims at preserving the availability of the land for future, if hypothetical, urban development projects. Both sites have an exterior façade that masks an interior space prone to disorder"
>
> (Tonnelat 2008:303).

Co-opted by commercial companies the interstice and its residents are kept apart from the life of the city by their designation as 'temporary'. In this line of thinking, the space is held in tension between a functional past, and feasible future.

Alternatively we can view interstitial spaces as barriers against orthodox development's "incessant appeals to the future" (NEOutopia 2012:605) by realising the joy in temporality – the idea that engagement is finite. As Tonkiss (2013) acknowledges, seen alongside grand architecture these interventions can seem trivial,

ephemeral “dismissed as temporary as if that in itself were a bad thing” (Tonkiss 2013:318). Short timescales circumvent certain risks involving the amount of money and time invested that can stunt traditional construction.

Tonkiss (2013) goes further to introduce the concept of “spaces of deceleration” – particular sites that “slow the accelerated pulse of cities given over to retail consumption and rapid transit” that “help retard the frenetic cycle of urban obsolescence, investment and intervention” (Tonkiss 2013:320). Small incremental changes build both the material and relational space over time. The interstitial therefore provides the potential to not only shape the space, but also the pace of a city.

#### 2.1.3.4 Characteristics of Interstitial Spaces: Differences in Use

Differences in time (in either the creation or ongoing transformation of these spaces) challenges conceived notions of planning and design practices through everyday actions of users. Indeed, it is a basic urban (and maybe human) error to think about spatial interventions as being for an ‘end user’; there is no such thing as an end user: there are only users over time. In this way, the creation and management of interstitial spaces can be conceptualised as an embodied practice and process rather than focusing on outcomes. This brings emphasis to phenomena at a local scale; drawing attention to how individual stakeholders form and engage with the continual development of their environment.

Within arts sector research two main projects are worth considering for their investigation of how temporality can be retooled for long-term social benefit. Firstly, The Broedplaatsen, or Art Factories program in Amsterdam was introduced in 2000, agreed by the city council and funded by land lease and urban development budgets.

The policy aim was to encourage the view of Amsterdam as an inclusive, Creative City and reduce the number of illegal squats by introducing affordable studios, or 'incubator spaces'. The Bureau Broedplaatsen, funded by the City of Amsterdam was created to oversee the development and play an independent role in matching artists with spaces. The outcome in real terms was 10,000 mtsq of 'creative space' developed throughout the city acting as 'contra-gentrification' and cementing artists' physicality in the urban scene.

Secondly, in a city characterised by its temporary uses of urban space (horticultural use of the Tiergarten post-war, and an informal club scene in the 90's); Urban Pioneers (Raumpioniere) represented a recognition of the potential in undeveloped urban space. Starting in 2004, this project mapped over 100 grassroots projects working without significant capital or formal planning. The Raumpioniere continues to be led by grassroots sources and has not encountered the same level of top down formalisation and management as the Broedplaatsen project,

Both examples share commonalities with the interstitial space in this research. Namely, that they see users as co-creators and partners in urban development. Furthermore, they both represent a conceptualisation that moves away from considering urbanism as something purely physical and formal, to a focus on how people create space through everyday use and incremental change. Interstitial space is perceived as less regulated than other urban spaces allowing residents to conceptualise them, and us them on their own terms to certain extent (Boudreault-Fournier & Wees 2017). Through this conceptualisation we can see the shared characteristics with a

form of ‘urban commons’, namely the continual process of co-creation that imbues a sense of ownership. For Linebaugh (2014) commoning is best understood as verb rather than a noun; it is a process whereby social relations within a group allow for the sharing of resources. Linebaugh also distinguishes the ‘common’ from the ‘public’, the former dependent on “custom, memory and oral transmission for the maintenance of its norms, rather than law, police and media” (Linebaugh 2014:14). As with the interstitial, the commons only belongs to those who engage and participate.

However, drawing comparison with the commons opens up interstitial space to the same criticisms, namely how their use defines how users and non-users engage with them. In contrast to public space, which is held by an authority for the benefit of all, commons (and by extension interstitial spaces) can be determined by limited groups of stakeholders with a geographical and ideological attachment to a site. McKenzie (1996) introduced the concept of a ‘Privatopia’ in order to describe forms of homeowners’ associations in the USA that take over the management of what would previously been the remit of local government. This includes administration, property maintenance and the making and enforcing of rules (McKenzie 1996). What may be indirectly similar to the interstitial spaces is the framing of the ‘closed common’ – that is, “the common as a complex social and political ecology that is bound and closed rather than open, and it exists in order to nurture and sustain particular groups” (Coppola and Vanolo 2015:1156). Traditional urban design assumes a division between the makers and users of space that does not relate to the interstitial. However, this section has highlighted a potential division, and possible tensions between any original and later stage users. If commoning, and by relation interstitial space, should

always be about expanding those who can participate questions remain over the implications of a closed network.

If the previous section has thrown into question how these interstitial spaces exist within a local framework, we must also ask how they operate when the scale of regulation is now no longer entirely local. The debate on 'rescaling' was developed by the works of Erik Swyngedouw (1997). His work observed the hollowing out of the state arising from the rapid expansion of trade, foreign investment and international financial flows restructuring regulatory codes, norms and institutions (Swyngedouw 1997). For urban spaces, the question is not only how they operate on a local or even national scale, but a global scale. This is even more pertinent for urban art spaces – dependent as they are on a global, international artworld.

Drawing attention to global operations is not to take away from phenomena at a local scale, rather to highlight the multiple factors at play in the formation and continued existence of these spaces. Local practices are always framed by broader (both national and international) movements. Referring back to Tonkiss (2013), she writes,

> "the lightly built interstitial structure gives material shape to everyday practices and critical politics that cut through these standard distinctions; which are both ingrained in local sites and like to each other – often quite distant – spaces where related practices and politics break the surface. These spaces are both embedded in their localities and link to other – often quite distant – spaces where related practices and politics break the surface creating "networks of strength"
>
> (Tonkiss 2013:317).

This conceptualises the spaces as nodes in an inter-urban network or rather, lines in a series of *urban cracks* (Tonkiss 2013:317).

This artworld is spatialised through a network of institutions (schools, museums, galleries, universities) that confer value through accreditation and exhibition. These 'nodes' act independently but also collectively - the act of sharing works between museums and galleries for temporary displays act as a network for conveying value removed from the specificities of place. Therefore, whilst the human, social and cultural capital of art is ultimately rooted in place (Pinheiro and Dowd 2009), engaging with the arts market takes both the art and artists from the local, engendering consumption on a global scale.

The sites individually share similar features – co-production, and collaborative acts of gathering, learning – yet prior research has yet to investigate interstitial artist-run initiatives potential as *networked space.* As noted previously, art spaces cannot work in isolation: a network of institutions engender production and consumption on a global scale. In recognition of this gap in the literature, this research seeks to address if, and how these spaces work together to transverse time and space.

#### 2.1.3.5 Differences in Value

Considerations concerning the different uses of interstitial spaces lead naturally to a discussion to how different uses and users create different values. Firstly, there is a need to consider how the process of occupying and managing space is a recursive action that might offer radical alternatives to the current models of territory and control. Stuart Hodkinson (2012) argued that these spaces represent urban struggles against new enclosures. They are reactionary to a catalogue of privatisations, evictions, dispossessions, and lockdowns of sites (housing, open land, infrastructure, public spaces and services) that were once held or used in public or in common.

Therefore, these spaces are selected because of their potential for temporary, incremental re-appropriation of space by smaller (in this instance, cultural) organisations (Tonkiss 2013). Whilst still reliant on the "economic power and public funding conventions of policy makers and cultural planners" (Bain & McLean 2013:93) they argue that "local non-capitalist spaces…are essential" (ibid.) for culture to be used as a regenerative force.

The difficulty comes with how these spaces negotiate with the "policy makers and cultural planners" highlighted by Bain and McLean (2013). Urban interstices cannot reside in complete autonomy; they are institutionally created and controlled and therefore subject to forms of economic, social and spatial control (Tonnelat 2008). However, I recognise a commonality in traits with Pickerill and Chatterton's (2006) conceptualisation of autonomous spaces centred around 'spaces where people desire to constitute non-capitalist, egalitarian, and solidaristic forms of political, social and economic organisation through a combination of resistance and creation" (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006:730). In this, they recognise the *desire* to work outside the system that is not always embodied. Indeed, Sorens (2012) draws attention to the idea that autonomy can never be a synonym for independence and self-reliance due to the constant compromise and negotiation with local governance. He describes how spaces of "resistance and creation" are ultimately part of a system of flows and services from the outside. The art world is reliant on the art market; these spaces cannot be insular, rather allow for the movement of users and their work. Consequently, the creation and development of these spaces, and the work they produce cannot be recognised as an "insurgent practice of a complete and often conflictual separation from the state … but rather a 'regulated' practice negotiated on a contractual basis" (Coppola and Vanolo

2015:1164). As Tonnelat (2008) highlights, "the land is controlled or at least monitored by a relatively large number of institutions in charge of the land. We can thus speak of an institutional production and use of the interstices as margins of manoeuvre of a dominant order" (Tonnelat 2008:303).

Although not concerned with a particularly *temporary* invention in urban space, Coppola and Vanolo's (2015) writing about the normalisation of Christiania in Copenhagen raises some interesting points on the development of 'terrains vagues'. Christiania is an autonomous Free Town located in the centre of Copenhagen, Denmark. Originating from a squat on a disused military base in 1971, the site has grown to encompass residential properties formed from the remnants of the base, a food production network and educational provision in the form of a small kindergarten and youth club. Negotiations with the state meant that in 2011 residents were able to secure their long-term future on the site. However, Coppola and Vanolo (2015) draw attention to the encroachments on both the space and the ideology behind its inception (namely autonomy and social experimentation) through these negotiations heralded. They write:

> "On the one hand it has to be considered that Free Town [Christiania] is a relevant tourist attraction, and therefore it is important for the Copenhagen policy makers to take advantage of Christiania by preserving it, while at the same time, 'normalising it' meaning to remove the excess in order to allow the widening of the spectrum of potential tourists, and, according to critics, to represent Free Town as a kind of 'hippie Disneyworld'"
>
> (Coppola and Vanolo 2015:1154).

I would argue that the normalising of Christiania represents the transition of value creation from internal to external sources. The spaces are legitimised and valued only when seen as a branding exercise for competing cities, rather than valuable for *their*

*radical, community potential.* Interventions in urban space can never be seen as acts of tabula rasa. Conflicting demands, contractual obligations and political imperatives make grassroots developments problematic.

Interstitial space has a symbiotic relationship with the reclamation of urban space. This is not understood in monetary terms, but in how individuals relate to the spaces they interact with. Bain & McLean's (2013) study into artistic collectives focused on collectivist approaches to artistic practice through two case studies on the Waterfront Trail Artists Association in Etobicoke, Ontario and Don Blanche in Shelburne, Ontario. In looking at how these communities have sustained themselves, they argue, the residents have reconfigured their working lives to a more collective orientation. For Bain & McLean (2013) co-creation leads to a sense of ownership over not only artistic work produced, but also the buildings and spaces that constituted their environment. They write:

> "Through collective organising and voluntary reciprocity, artists…have created seemingly ordinary shared space where non-capitalist modes of cultural (re)production explicitly celebrate the creative process and the meditative development of ideas as useful activities in themselves that require no additional economic justification or material end product"
>
> (Bain & McLean 2013:16).

Here we are presented with the notion of value creation through collective practice, rather than in utility or monetary terms. These spaces possess a "disruptive materiality" that acts to "dislocate…familiar structures and narratives" (Gibson & Graham 2006:33) surrounding traditional models of artistic production. This is not to lessen the value in individual artistic practice, rather to recognise the value in spaces where these skills can be developed collectively alongside different modes of experimentation, work and interaction.

Despite the utopian thinking of Bain & McLean's research, it must be noted that their study focused on the suburban and ex-urban spatial margins of Toronto. How does this translate when applied to urban spaces? Possible answers to this question can be found in the work of Jacobs (1961). Her work draws attention to the increased regulation of urban space. In 1961 Jacobs wrote "in all utopias the right to have plans of any significance belonged only to the planners in charge" (Jacobs 1961:27) raising the question who are these urban spaces creating value for?

Prior research draws attention to the spread of new urban development agendas based on 'entrepreneurial' urban policies (Cox 1993; Hall and Hubbard 2008; Harvey 1989; Jessop 2002). Furthermore, Osborne and Rose (1999) use the Foucaultian concept of governmentality to show how neoliberal agendas have reframed individuals and local communities as agents that are increasingly responsible for the pursuit of their own well-being in areas (urban services, safety) that were once controlled by the state. For Mayer (2013) the normalisation of interstitial urban development represents the co-opting of urban activism into a more traditional economic development script. She writes,

> "squatted buildings, open spaces and other "biotopes" which precarious artists made interesting or anarchists spiffed up and furbished became harnessed by clever city officials and (especially real estate) capital as branding assets that contribute to the image of "cool cities" or "happening places"
>
> (Mayer 2013:11)

Temporary sites are tolerated as a form of speculative development in order to "keep vacant sites warm while development capital is cool" (Tonkiss 2013:318): to provide

bread, and in the case of the arts circuses in the absence of public and private investment. In this instance, value creation moves from the spaces' potential as collectives into their ability as ground breaking for more conventional rent-seeking urban development. As with the urban activists Mayer describes, "gestures of occupying and re-making terrains vagues [wastelands] come as readily to property developers as they do to green nomads and architectural collectives" (Tonkiss 2013:317).

Whilst interstitial space has a symbolic relationship with the reclamation of urban space, practically this reclamation offers the promise of various forms of capitalism. Creative activity and creative vitality in any area hold the promise (or threat depending on viewpoint) of increased property prices. It is important here to acknowledge the body of literature on gentrification in relation to artists in place. As Klunzman argued, "Each story of regeneration begins with poetry and ends with real estate" (Klunzman 2004:2). First coined by Glass (1964), gentrification was a means to explain the physical process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents. For Hamnett (2003) gentrification is the social and spatial manifestation of a post-industrial society that favours the production of urban space for progressively more affluent users (Hamnett 2003). Unmanaged, disused sites previously discussed are reframed by this narrative as offering a new socio-spatial identity for aspiring artists to package themselves as exciting and alternative, and distinguish themselves against more traditional, conservative art venues (Garnett 1998). The narrative of gentrification in relation to artists positions them as ground breakers for conventional development; as Robinson and McCormick (1984) write, "changing aesthetic

conventions and consumption go along with changes in urban space. In this regard, artists are often thought of as an urban vanguard" (Robinson and McCormick 1984:172) indirectly setting the stage for change (Ley 2003).

In this narrative, artists are reframed as transformative agents with "the capacity to confer aesthetic status on objects that are banal or even 'common'" (Bourdieu 1984:5). In spatial terms, this extends from a building, to a neighbourhood or an entire district. This 'aesthetic status' and its related cultural capital is then appropriated by market forces with the subsequent displacement of artists to cheaper districts. Gentrification is framed as a potential vehicle for bringing improvements (higher property values, decreases in crime, increased local amenities) to disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Freeman and Braconi 2004; Brown-Saracino 2010; Papachristos, Scherer and Fugiero 2011) but also a cause for displacement of indigenous communities and businesses. Whilst the gentrification literature describes how neighbourhoods are lauded as having 'bounced back', the problem may have merely bounced elsewhere.

#### 2.1.3.6 Seed bed for traditional development or grounds for utopia?

This section has explored alternatives to the Creative City script evident in interstitial spaces. In this, it has examined how they differ from traditional urban planning both spatially and temporally, as well as how they frame value creation. We are now presented with two conflicting arguments over what these spaces represent; the interstitial as seedbed for traditional development, or grounds for an experimental utopia.

Critics of interstitial developments argue that they represent 'roll-with-it' neo-liberalisation in which principles such as self-management, self-realisation and unconventional or insurgent creativity have been appropriated as essential ingredients of sub local regeneration programs (Keil 2009). For Peck (2012), in light of state withdrawal the spaces serve as "backfilling efforts" on the part of voluntary, non-profit and business actors. This acts to "deepen the reliance of cities on symbolically resonant, market orientated and low-cost initiatives that marry aspirational goals (creativity, sustainability, liveability etc.) with projects that work with the grain of localised incentives and business as usual interests" (Peck 2012 629, 648). Therefore, informal design and temporary use can be seen as compensatory and diversionary in the face of political retreat and economic recession.

Furthermore, problems arise in the co-opting of these spaces as vague volunteerism to paper over the effects of austerity measures (Tonkiss 2013). Rosol (2012) notes the over reliance of current government on outsourcing municipal services to (unpaid) private actors; to fill spaces where the state and private investment has retracted as a form of ameliorative urbanism. For interstitial space this leads to a repurposing that positions them as nothing more than "cultural social services" (Bain & McLean 2013:96).

This is not to negate the real-world benefits of being able to form space by hand – which re-orientates us to an embodied form of spatial creation. Small acts, temporary solutions or collective interventions provide an antidote to the pervasiveness of formal design-led urban projects. This process of formularisation restricts urban possibilities

and remains tied to the abstract notion that some modes of working, creating and living are inherently superior– more productive, feasible or aesthetically pleasing. As Taylor writes, "the idea that the complex teeming metropolis might be a desirable living environment did not come into the picture" (Taylor 1998:36). The interstitial, therefore, is centred on *possibility*; exploring urban spaces that are not fixed, but experimental. This chimes with Lynch's (1968) notion of the *possible city* – grounded not in some better future to come after austerity but produced within tight corners and current conditions. He writes how,

> "dealing with the existing city is the search for underused space and time, and its re-adaptation for a desired activity. We can explore the use of streets as play areas, or the possibilities for using roof tops, empty stores, abandoned buildings, waste lots, odd bits of land or the large areas presently sterilised by such mono-culture as parking lots, expressways, railroad yards and airports"
>
> (Lynch [1968] 1995:776)

The interstitial space in this thesis located the cracks in the city and repurposed them for inventive artistic practice. Through this, interstitial space is able to look towards "a future that is not inherently better: a future that does not hold abstract utopian promises but the possibilities and harsh realities of the lived urban environment" (City Bound Collective 2012: 597).

Lefebvre ([1968] 1996:155) spoke of 'experimental utopias as testbeds for alternative urban possibilities. This is to introduce the prospect of urban spaces that are not simply passive. It also signposts the possibilities inherent in incremental experimentation most succinctly summed up by Jacobs (1961). She writes how,

> "cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city planning and city design. This is the laboratory in which city planning should have been learning and forming and testing its theories. Instead the practitioners and teachers of this discipline (if such it can be called) have

> ignored the study of success and failure in real life, have been incurious about the reasons for unexpected success, and are guided instead by principles derived from the behaviour and appearance of towns, suburbs, tuberculosis sanatoria, fairs and imaginary dream cities - from anything but cities themselves"
>
> (Jacobs 1961:16).

The city should not be framed as a utopian ideal – its potential for experimentation exists in the in-between, the cracks – the interstitial. Whilst More's (1516) Utopia was an imagined place that only reflected on the real the interstitial, following Lefebvre, Jacobs and Lynch, is tangible. Following this mode of thinking, interstitial interventions can be seen as a way of making the utopianism less abstract, providing examples of how we might "be" or "live" within urban space - a "what if" rather than a "this is what".

### 2.1.4 Why do artists move?

In general terms, we can now trace the emergence of two contrasting regenerational spaces. On the one hand, standardised spaces created as a result of top down policy processes, broadly organised under the term, 'the Creative City'. The other formed out of ad-hoc, incremental appropriation of empty urban spaces – the interstitial. This study's focus on the latter seeks to add depth to our understanding of the relationship between space and artistic practice, attentive to the particular idiosyncrasies that interstitial space engenders. We use the word 'resident' and 'residencies' when talking about artistic practice in place. This is etymologically linked to residence suggesting stability and permanence. However, the 'short-termism' of funding, work space and labour practices mean artists lifeworlds are increasingly subject to flux. Indeed, being a 'resident' by extension means being 'non-resident' at times.

With this in mind, it would be pertinent to conclude the literature review by returning the artist as an individual and asking how they are framed, managed and mastered by the previous discussion on space. In real terms, the constant thematic link has been change - change in identity, work and place - but why do artists move? Previous literature has addressed the proposed differing rationales behind artists' relocation - the summation of which can be conceptualised in three ways: the framing of artists as 'Immigrant', 'Nomad' or a 'Circulating Class'. These metaphors provide a means of making sense of the diverse actors and actions that characterise artists' movement. At the same time, they also act to structure and shape our perception and understanding. Therefore, we can look at these metaphors as both reflective of real world events and also as emblematic of wider shifts in how artistic identity is communicated and performed.

#### 2.1.4.1 The Artist as Circulating Class

Under austerity, artists are seen as key economic drivers for cities and nations. Governments have been interested in how to nurture creative talent and produce the conditions where such talent can be leveraged to create new enterprises and innovation that lead to economic dynamism. A central concept of the Creative City script is that creative people, those with high levels of cultural capital, and therefore artists, are attracted to places most conducive to creative activity (Florida 2002). As a result, urban policy makers aim to produce places that will attract creative people (hence creative placemaking and other place-based strategies discussed previously). Contemporary community economic development theories construe immigrant cultural workers as embodying desired values and promising certain outcomes (Grant and Buckwold 2013:114). The Creative City script (Florida 2002, Landry 2008)

encourages the movement of artists; they offer diversity, creativity and generate urban vibrancy (Grant and Buckwold 2013). Both Florida (2002) and Landry (2008) conceptualise artists as a 'circulating class'. That is artists have enough pre-existing capital (economic, social, and cultural) to consume and settle in locations based on their potential, and then form place to their own predilections. This is contradictory to the tenets of gentrification that argue artists are forced to relocate to make space for progressively more affluent users (Hackworth 2002). According to this thesis, artists are assimilated into the local populace providing socio-economic dynamism to run down urban areas. The artists develop as the places do, attracting more people in a form of 'virtuous cycle'. In the 'knowledge economy', artists are conceptualised as a 'floating reserve' – not a 'brain drain' but a 'brain circulation'. In this narrative, any artistic relocation is not the result of forcing out, but willing flight (Pratt 2009).

This overtly positive theorisation has its critics. Highlighting Florida's assertion that artists are part of a new 'Creative Class' Peck (2005) writes

> "the script and nascent practices of urban creativity are peculiarly well suited to entrepreneurialised and neoliberalised urban landscapes. They provide a means to intensify and publically subsidise urban consumption systems for a circulating class of gentrifiers whose *lack of commitment to place* and whose *weak community ties* are perversely celebrated"
>
> (Peck 2005:764 Emphasis added).

Artists, rather than assimilate, form a 'circulating class' – that is, artists gain enough economic capital to be able to choose location. Therefore, wider socio-economic benefits are questionable when artists are in a place but not of a place.

There are two issues with this conceptualisation. Firstly, this positioning of *all* artists as a 'circulating class' does not consider those who do not, or cannot move; those who do not carry the necessary capital – economic, social or cultural – to identify and move to the most tolerant, bohemian or technologically advanced neighbourhoods or cities. Secondly, little research has addressed what happens after this spatial transformation. That artists' act as a form of urban change makers is not disputed; however, it is what happens *after* that is problematic. We are presented with two conflicting narratives; artists are either assimilated into a locality or they move/are moved on. Whilst each provides a clear rationale for urban change what it does not answer is this: if artists move, is it the enactment of gentrification (rising prices etc.) or a desire to, in Siegelbaum's (2013) words, find another locality that is not too 'done'? This research seeks to answer that question in Newcastle upon Tyne.

#### 2.1.4.2 The Artist as Nomad

Siegelbaum's (2013) work is influential for presenting another rationale for why artists re-locate. If the 'circulating class' thesis centres on artists movement as emblematic of their desire to mould the specificities of place to their own proclivities, the artist as nomad uses the specificities of place for inspiration. The artist as nomad is looking for the 'authentic' space. However, a claim for authenticity is not something innate, but the result of collective designation. Authenticity is a "claim that is made by or for someone, thing or performance and either accepted or rejected by relevant others" (Peterson 2005:1086). Because of this social construction, it is ephemeral, subject to passing whims and trends.

The nomad, for Deleuze and Guattari (1980) is a symbol of flux, mobility and hybridity juxtaposed against fixity, purity and centralised authority. Boltanski and Chiapello (2000) encapsulate this romantic notion of the artist as a 'networked, globetrotting nomad', moving around with no fixed home, driven or acclimatised to roam, always expecting to settle 'one day'. Adverse to the gentrification literature that says artists are forced to move, we are now presented with the argument that artists choose to move. In this bohemian narrative artists' movement is serendipitous rather than drawn by government recruitment or forced by waves of gentrification. They move because they are attracted to the qualities of place – the natural environment, character of the city, the lifestyle and pace of life (Williams 2012), quilting together job patterns that enable them to relate their work to their art (Jackson 2004). For the artist as nomad, any relocation is a choice; workers exercise personal agency in making decisions about where they live and work (Waite 2009). Markusen (2006) furthers this, contending that artists' residence locations in the US were a "function of semi-autonomous personal migration decisions" (Markusen 2006 in Phillips 2011:38).

Running through this metaphor is the notion that movement and mobility provide inspiration and stimulation whilst simultaneously papering over the inherent privilege that autonomous migration decisions entail (Kaplan 1996). As Brooks (2000) writes, "it is the ultimate sign of privilege – to be able to hit the road in search of new meaning whenever that little moth of tedium flies in the door" (Brooks 2000:134). Movement itself has been mythologised, encouraging a tendency to erase any differences in the experience of movement. The artist as nomad, unbound and able to wander, is a romantic figure yet seldom the producer of critical discourses. Responding to this, I

propose to open up a space for multiple accounts of artists' movements to better reflect the complex nature of artistic practice within urban space.

### 2.1.4.3 The Artist as Migrant

Questions remain over this constant relocation; does it represent privilege or is this movement driven by necessity? An increasing body of literature concerns the commonalities between artists and migrants. The short-termism of funding, work and space necessitates constant relocation. Therefore, the artist as migrant moves from one place to another not through choice, or to find inspiration, but in order to find work or better living conditions. They are subject to the common side effects of constant re-locations; namely the lack of economic security, high risk and temporary work. This new conceptualisation has much in common with the notion of the artist as precariat in the previous section.

Whilst migrant itself remains associated with certain pejorative rhetoric, renaming artists as nomads or part of a circulating class does not negate certain issues that arise with re-location. This is a particular issue when re-location involves ceasing, or limiting artistic practice. As Leslie and Catungal write, "There is an ironic and unproductive contradiction between policies that attempt to attract creative workers and those that prevent these workers from practicing their occupations" (Leslie and Catungal 2012:8). In other words, whilst artists may offer diversity, creativity and urban vibrancy, they cannot if they are prevented from practicing. Sommerville and Walsworth (2009) drew attention to the fact that creative workers trained in their home countries may not have their skills and training recognised upon moving. Furthermore, a study by Pratt (1999) highlighted the particular problem of immigrant deskilling that

accompanied relocation. Artistic practices may not translate easily or may require materials that are not locally available. Grant and Buckwold (2013) raised the same issues in their work. Using a qualitative methodology based on interviews with both migrant and immigrant artists they concluded that, while membership in local social networks is crucially important in providing access to economic opportunities, these networks prove difficult for diverse newcomers to penetrate successfully.

The notion of 'success' and its translation remains problematic when discussing artistic labour. Nee and Sanders (2001) developed the notion of 'human cultural capital that is fungible in the host society' (Nee and Sanders 2001:386) as a heuristic device. The 'fungibility' of human-cultural capital depends on how well cultural practices from the source location aid success in the context of the new place of residence. However, this research assumes that the cultural value of migrants' cultural capital is measured neutrally; rather than seen through the prism of individual, local and even national agendas. They also neglect to address the potentially conflicting measures of success for individuals. Menger (1999) acknowledges the diverse ways of assessing value for those who find work as artists; and discourages the view of a 'winner take all' attitude to artistic success. If success is measured in professional work then there must be the acknowledgement of multiple jobs, frequent career setbacks and short-term, contract-based work. If value is merely economic then how do we account for work that never sells? As Frank and Carlisle-Frank (2009) observe, success is hard to quantify, "because the people who have no success as obtaining publishing contracts but do have novels/screenplays sitting in their closets, demo CDs but no music contracts, or have auditioned for hundreds of parts but never landed a paid acting role are not counted in the mix" (Frank and Carlisle-Frank 2009:386).

Erel (2010) offers a Bourdieusian rationale for how artists negotiate this relocation, managing to practice in often disparate locations. She describes how a 'rucksack' approach to cultural capital views migrants as bringing with them a package of cultural resources that they 'unpack' in the new location. These resources may or may not fit with the 'culture' of the new residence. However,

> "Where human capital theorists conceptualise cultural capital as a key that the migrant puts in her backpack and, once in the country of immigration, unpacks to see if it fits the 'keyhole' of the cultural system of the country of immigration, Bourdieusian scholars view migrants' cultural capital as a treasure chest consisting of language skills, knowledge about customs and lifestyles, professional qualifications etc."
>
> (Erel 2010: 643)

That is, for Erel (2010) it is the adaptability of the individual artist and their skill set that enable them to practice across locations. Tenacity and reinvention remain necessary to ensure continued practice. Whilst this third conceptualisation seeks to undo the romanticisation of artistic labour, it does little to address, if movement and temporality are features of artists lived experience, the reality of constant relocation for both artists and their practice. The three conceptualisations are lacking in their depth. As with the broad definition of 'creative' earlier in this work, by grouping together artists, the literature neglects the qualitative, temporal and spatial differences they encounter.

### 2.1.5 Summary: limitations in the literature

So far, this chapter has explored the literature on both artistic practice, its definitions and how it has been subject to the flux of economic forces, urban planning and policy agendas. I have also explored the interrelation between the artworld, the creative

industries and the Creative City script with the aim of contextualising artistic practice within the theoretical and physical 'spaces' in which they operate.

This review does not profess to be exhaustive of all existing interpretations of art, the creative industries and the Creative City; it has sought to identify key trends amongst a diverse body of literature. Additionally, it aimed highlight the key actors shaping discussion. However, it revealed a lack of embodied research, attentive to the particular idiosyncrasies of artistic labour within interstitial space (Walmsley 2016). Whilst the literature in this chapter is useful for locating the research within certain ongoing discourses it, yet, has not turned its focus to the everyday, embodied experience of participation. Moreover, little has addressed the *consequences* of participation. These are important questions, and worthy of further academic attention.

In this chapter, it has also been argued that the Creative City script requires further critical attention. Framing artistic practice as instrumental in urban regeneration often occludes the multiple, diverse practices that it encompasses. Implicating them in wider narratives of gentrification or urban regeneration thus often occludes the particular in favour of the general. Furthermore, it re-iterates the continuing misconception that the only option for urban space is gentrification or decay.

Current research has not yet formulated a specific descriptor for artistic interventions in urban space, one that is attentive to the multiple diverse practices yet succinctly surmises the phenomena. As a response to this, I have introduced the concept of the interstitial as a physical aspect of urban planning, but also a conceptual tool to think about the relationship between self and place. With this in mind, the term artist-run interstitial spaces will be used as an umbrella term for clarity, whilst remaining attentive to particular differences and tensions.

The exploration of the relationship between self and place is continued in the following chapter. This aims to detail the conceptual approach of the thesis, namely the work of Lefebvre, Heidegger and the concepts of the everyday and dwelling.

## 2.2 Conceptual Approach

### 2.2.1 Making space for Artists: Lefebvre and the production of space

More widely seen in urban geography, architecture and design, Lefebvre has not been widely applied in arts research. Yet both the material and the social is critical to the understanding of how artists make and experience interstitial space. I have drawn on Lefebvre's concepts of both the production of space and the everyday as a way of understanding the production of place as something social and spatial. Lefebvre encourages the notion that space should not be merely thought of as a physical place, a neutral container or pre-existent stage, but as an entity actively produced by society (Lefebvre 1991b). Works by Lynch (1960), Jacobs (1961) and Cullen (1961) supported these notions, arguing that the urban environment shapes our behaviour, knowledge and disposition. Lefebvre's stress on the collective dimensions of space and collective modes of experience and imagination is crucial. Indeed, as Benjamin (1936) contended, architecture, and by extension space is the medium for collective experience. Lefebvre's work helps us understand how this collective space is moulded within and by this collective experience, creating the conditions of a reflexive discovery of artistic practice in interstitial urban space.

Lefebvre conceptualises space as something that is produced through an act of triangulation. This triangulation encompasses spatial practices – practices that occur within a physical space, then representations of space (conceived or abstract space) as well as representational space (lived space or everyday space). Lefebvre's aim in defining a triangulation was to highlight the social production of space into the

conceptualisation of material space analysing an apparent dualism between abstract space (conceived) and physical space (perceived). This production is constantly in flux – "relations between conceived-perceived-lived spaces aren't even stable, nor should they be grasped artificially or linearly" (Merrifield 2006:111), drawing attention to the contradictory and contingent nature of any urban intervention in space.

Lefebvre (1991b) defined representations of space (or conceived space) as the official conceptualisation of space from technocrats, planners and architects - the "dominant space in any society" (Lefebvre 1991b:38-39). It is a space conceived of abstractly in advance of lived space. Conversely, representational space (or lived space) is everyday life, it is the "dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate…it overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects" (Lefebvre 1991b:38-39). Finally, he presents the idea of spatial practices – practices that produce the space of that society. This is a perceived space of the senses, a conflation where "spatial practice consists in a projection onto a (spatial) field of all aspects, elements and moments of social practice … in the spatial practise of neocapitalism…representations of space facilitate the manipulation of representational spaces [lived spaces]" (Lefebvre 1991b:38-39). The following diagram represents Lefebvre's triangulation applied to this research.

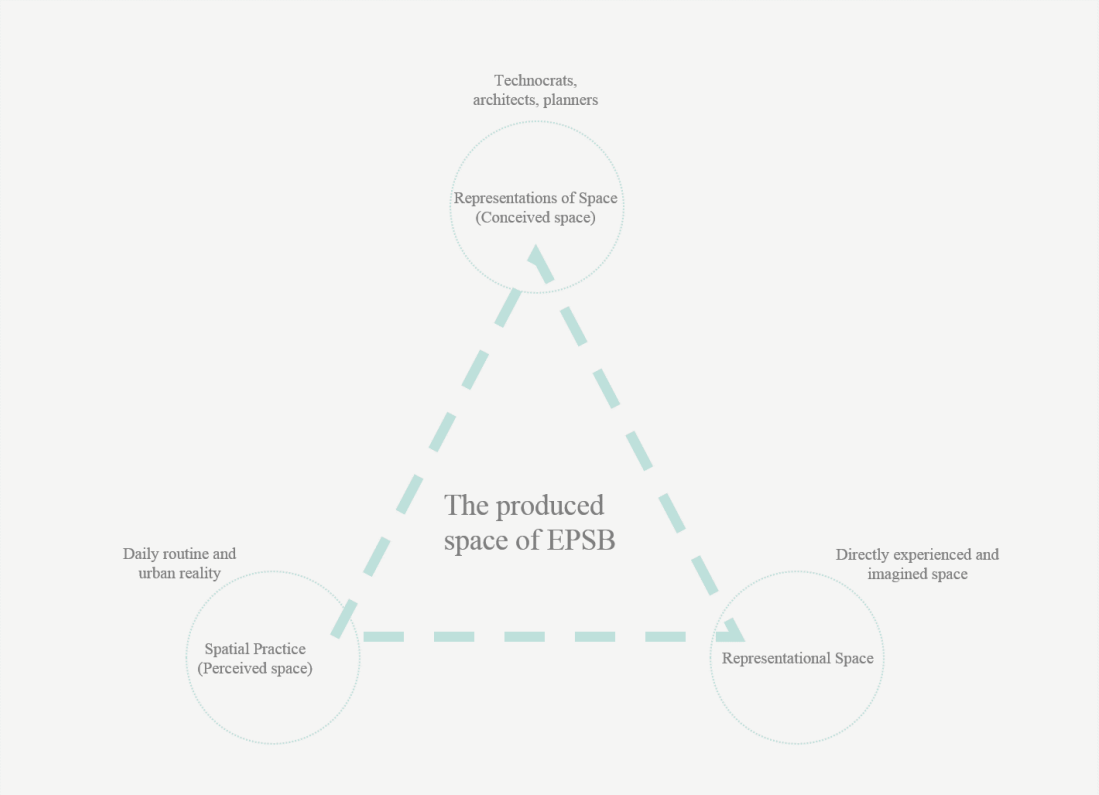


*Figure 2: Lefebvre's Triad (1991b)*

Lefebvre's triangulation reminds us to take into account the emotional lives that are subjective and imagined which are needed to make sense of the abstract space and encounters in physical space. In this thesis, the triad is a reminder that space is produced by the everyday actions of artists as well as the result of other discourses and power relations. As Lefebvre notes, "space is at once result and cause, product and producer" (Lefebvre 1991b:39). I argue Lefebvre's triad is useful as an analytical tool when considering the dualism between artists and space because of its emphasis on the function of the imagination within spatial production, giving significance to the lived experience of artists, something cited as absent in current arts literature.

### 2.2.2 The Everyday

At the heart of this research is the everyday lived experience of artists; their mundane practices and the spaces they inhabit. Indeed, artistic practice opens up possibilities of understanding the structuring of everyday life through its multiple and ambiguous sets of meanings that are translated into place and identity. The everyday is nuanced, offering spaces where new meaning is created through direct incremental quotidian use (Gardiner 2000). Furthermore, the everyday happens around us all the time, forming part of our peripheral vision (Highmore 2011). Gardiner quotes Maurice Blanchot regarding the everyday:

> "The everyday is platitude, what lags and falls back, the residual life with which our trash cans and cemeteries are filled … but this banality is also what is important, if it brings us back to existence in its very spontaneity and as it is lived – in the moment when, lived, it escapes every speculative formulation, perhaps all coherence, all regularity"
>
> (Gardiner 2000:1).

The everyday forms a constant theme in Lefebvre's research (Till 2009) yet is often excluded when considering popular narratives of both art and space. The UK has highly developed national systems – The DCMS and Arts Council England for example – as well as professional discourse on planning and building that quickly dominate any conversation concerning urban space and artistic practice to the detriment of more incremental and heuristic aspects of the everyday. Indeed, the traditional relationships that regulated the movement of art from the studio to the gallery have been renegotiated. Art is no longer solely produced in studios and displayed in clinical white galleries. Researching the everyday provides a fissure in hegemonic space. In this way, looking at the everyday means a concerted effort to

incorporate the in-between sites - the interstitial - as the new everyday sites of art making.

This goes against the grain of a pervasive narrative that positions art and often artists as something 'other' that must be collected and displayed in (often funded) specialist spaces; studios, galleries, art centres. Indeed, art making has been positioned as a form of high-culture, an extraordinary practice distanced from the mundanity of everyday activity. The cancellation of a ceremonial street performance by New York based art group Rammellzee perfectly demonstrates this insidious thinking. A performance on the banks of the Thames was planned to celebrate the recent preservation of the Southbank Undercroft for "use without charge for skateboarding, BMX riding, street writing and other urban activities" (Southbank Centre Website 2015). However, the Southbank Centre intervened citing the lack of appropriate licences for a live outdoor event. The performance was confined to the North Bank of the river, far from the footprint of the Southbank centre and the recently preserved Undercroft. This happened despite the fact that works by Rammellzee had been displayed in the Southbank Centre during its 2013 exhibition, Guide to the Universe. This interaction reinforces the notion that art is only legitimate in certain spaces; spaces often removed from the everyday such as the street.

This example poses some questions; does the everyday exclude art making as too 'extraordinary'. Therefore, is the everyday reduced only to routine actions and meanings? In response to these questions I have drawn from Highmore (2002) who explains,

> "It might be that, in trying to compose an archive of 'habit, desire and accident', we could do worse than take as a starting point those complex imaginary

> investigations that go by the name of 'art'. Rather than treating art as high culture, requiring connoisseurship and elaborate decoding, the everyday life archive would render relevant works as experimental studies in the experiential realm of the daily"
>
> (Highmore 2002:31).

This thesis follows Highmore (2002) in the belief that the everyday encompasses a broad range of practices and conventions, conceived of as "familiar, taken-for-granted, common sense and trivial" (Williams 1961:96). Furthermore, whilst art making has been positioned as 'extraordinary' or 'spectacular', there is the recognition that for some it is an everyday practice. As I am interested in the construction and experience of artist-led space this has to remain attentive to the routine, and the ordinary as well as the spectacular.

One advantage of the everyday is that it highlights the potential for exploration at the level of the individual's experience. Furthermore, it re-orientates the researcher to an embodied form of research, as Taussig (1991) notes

> "But what sort of sense is constitutive of this everydayness? Surely this sense includes much that is not sense so much as sensuousness, an embodied and somewhat automatic 'knowledge' that functions like a peripheral vision, not studied contemplation, a knowledge that is imageric and sensate rather than ideational"
>
> (Taussig 1991:141).

The everyday should be something that is 'felt' rather than just observed. It calls for research that is embedded, with "a stress on feelings and experience" (Highmore 2002:5).

Furthermore, it demonstrates how radical gestures can be witnessed in the small steps taken by individuals in the course of their everyday lives. As de Certeau notes, the everyday represents "the centrality of human agency and the possibility of resistance to the dictates of bureaucratic reason within the ordinary, intimate, and familiar" (Gardiner, 2000:158). Everyday life is seen as the co-constitution of self and society. It is the assemblage of both the attitudes that shape the self and the processes of shaping the world. Indeed, the myth of the artist as a lone genius, isolated and exempt from everyday life has imploded. The artist's studio is the ideal combination of everyday and extraordinary, domestic and professional, formal and informal yet remains under researched, partly because it forms such a peripheral part of urban life. As Amin and Thrift (2002) write, "little of this appears in 'big picture' urban theory, when much of urban life is left out…the everyday rhythms of life have rarely counted" (Amin & Thrift 2002:18).

However, as Amin and Thrift (2002) note, the emancipatory potential of the everyday has been overemphasised. They write how

> "We need to be careful of with the notion of spaces of escape. Most such spaces are only brief respites. Most such spaces do not light the way to another land; at best, they give hints of another kind of future"
>
> (Amin & Thrift 2002:124).

Amin and Thrift (2002) highlight the apparent romanticisation of the everyday; these 'spaces of escape' offer little to change life as it is lived, rather acting as utopian abstraction. This romanticisation for Ingold (2000) can be countered through a reorientation to the embodied, lived experience of the everyday, removed from the abstract. In order to move away from this idealism, whilst simultaneously aligning

Lefebvre and the everyday, he suggests adopting a dwelling perspective. In using the concept of dwelling Lefebvre makes a distinction between the physical "box, a cadre" – and the social action of inhabiting space. Therefore, adopting a dwelling perspective allows for research that is attentive to multiple materialities and social actions that continually form the everyday.

### 2.2.3 Dwelling

In recent years dwelling has emerged as an alternative way to think about the spatiality of human life. I introduce the dwelling perspective because of the emphasis it brings to people, the landscape and building. Furthermore, it privileges the experiences of residents within the everyday. As a researcher, I have approached this thesis with the goal of understanding the messy world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt 1994). Whilst traditional thought has focused around the separation of subject/object, any research into these interstitial spaces must be based on involvement. Therefore, although the dwelling perspective is largely absent from the literature on artist-led spaces, it provides a useful framework for understanding the complex processes through which artists inhabit interstitial space.

Introduced by anthropologist Tim Ingold as a response to the unhelpful binary in traditional thought between subject/object, the dwelling perspective aims to develop a more profound way of understanding the relationship between humans and their environment. Drawing from the phenomenological work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, the "dwelling perspective", argues against the notion that human beings are detached subjects, observing the world from an outsider's perspective. This 'building perspective' assumes that space is "a tabula rasa onto which particularities of culture and history come to be inscribed, with place as the presumed result (…) to begin with

there is some empty and innocent spatial spread, waiting, as it were, for cultural configurations to render it placeful." (Casey 1996:14). Yet there remains an epistemological concern in "that there is something wrong if we can only understand our creative involvement in the world (…) by taking us out of it" (Ingold 1995:58).

He argues that, like a spider weaving a web or a fox fashioning a den, humans instinctively dwell. Ingold (1995) abandons the claim that because humans have the ability to plan, to imagine and design before practice that humans stand somehow 'outside' of nature. Such spectatorial epistemologies that position us as onlooker or as a non-participant have left us with a de-materialised and disembodied view of the world (Pons 2003). In response, Ingold (2000) proposes the move from "a 'building perspective', according to which worlds are made before they are lived in, to a 'dwelling perspective', according to which the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, only arise within the current of their life activities" (Ingold, 2000:154).

The *embeddedness* of humans in the world is the primary focus of this approach (Ingold 2000). Following from Heidegger, 'being' is always 'being-in-the-world' and, as such, cannot be separated. As Cloke and Jones identify, any act of building, living or thinking is formed in the context of "being-in-the-world" (Cloke and Jones 2001:651). It is instead a situated and contingent process of engagement. "Life…is not the revelation of pre-existing form but the very process wherein form is generated and held in place (Ingold 2000: 173). From a dwelling perspective, our 'being' is framed by our historicity – knowledge we have developed through past experience. This 'pre-understanding' (Seymour 2006) shapes how we interpret culture, practice, background and language. Therefore, while sense making is always situated and temporal, we also understand things through relating them to other things in the

environment, as well as their past and future (Seymour 2006). Therefore, Heidegger argues,

> "Rooted in the past, and faced with a future we are inescapably social beings whose understandings project into possibilities. Those possibilities are framed by history. We are not reducible to our present situation: we are in the midst of our possibilities, and we project them (entwirft) them all the time. This is never static; becoming who we are requires interpretation, not only of ourselves but also of inherent possibilities in the world. No account can be given of a human being without reference to what he or she is in the process of becoming"
>
> (Heidegger 1927, 1962).

Again, as with Lefebvre's triad there is an emphasis on spatial production within the imagination as well as the real. As Ingold re-iterates, this perspective understands that "the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagement with their surroundings" (Ingold 2000:186). Therefore, any research based on a dwelling perspective must consider not only material, but also imagined and remembered space.

This dwelling perspective is specifically drawn from Heidegger's (1971) proposition that, "We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are dwellers (…) To build is in itself already to dwell (…) Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build". His thinking opened up research to the temporal and processual dimensions of space. Our engagement with our environment is rendered through a relationship that is based on reciprocity. We are not omnipotent outsiders, but actively engaged as elemental aspects of it. The Heideggerian concept of dwelling places life as it is lived at its core. Lefebvre echoes this writing that, "each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space

and it also produces that space" (Lefebvre 1991: 169-70). It is a dialectic between ourselves and our environment that makes space. This, in turn, makes us. Again, as Ingold writes, people and their environments are continually, "bringing each other into being" (Ingold 2011:20). Space, like ourselves, that is always in a state of 'becoming'; it takes on new shapes and new identities, it is always emergent.

"Dwelling has a more directly rooted understanding of space or place, one that is closer to lived reaction" (Elden, 2004:191). This notion therefore ties together the artist, the artwork, but also the everyday of spatial production. Spaces are made meaningful by the everyday actions of residents during the course of their daily lives. In this way, we can link the concept of the everyday to a Heideggerian concept of dwelling. This gives priority to embodied practices, producing research that is situated, corporeal and relational. It is insufficient to focus only on the extraordinary processes of art making. There remains a need to de-mystify arts research towards a focus on the everyday, corporeal practices – the tiny acts that make and remake urban space. As Game writes, 'if there is any truth, it is the truth of the body' (Game: 1991:192). The apparent emphasis in previous research on disembodied outcomes rather than the lived experience of imagining, creating and managing space is something this research seeks to address. Furthermore, Drefus notes that for Heidegger 'being' attends to the involvement of humans with things (Drefus 1993:42). Dwelling implies taking care, cherishing or looking after. I want to apply this notion of care in this thesis, using it as a tool to investigate the attentive, incremental processes that form both art and art spaces.

However, using the dwelling perspective has limitations. As Cloke and Jones (2001) warn, dwelling needs to "shed this reliance on idyllic local boundedness" regarding the "romantic overtones which beset the illustrations offered by Heidegger and Ingold"

(Cloke and Jones 2001:661-664). Indeed, the Heideggerian form of dwelling described a particular form of rooted, situated and stable existence. This was not originally conceived to encompass the messy, fluid mobile life of the artist or the temporary spaces they occupy. I take up the call echoed by Pons (1995) that, "if dwelling is to be a useful concept in geography its interpretative scope has to be extended beyond its original usage. It should register the fleeting as well as the enduring, the mobile as well as fixed, the modern as well as the traditional." (Pons 1995:2).

Theory should not form a barrier between the researcher and life as it is lived. I was drawn to the dwelling perspective for its inherent sociability: it not only highlights the relationship between ourselves and the environment, but between individuals – encompassing landscapes of conflict but also tremendous care. This responds, in part to Walmsley's (2016) call for arts research that is participatory, empathic and embodied. Moving with artists through their everyday activity, I aim to incorporate "the 'sociality' of dwelling, a sociality which remains that of a community … the 'common' of dwelling, this reckoning of the space between us" (Harrison 2007:637) as a tool to explore the relationality of artistic practice within interstitial space with a new sensitivity.

The orientation of this thesis to a dwelling perspective that encompasses care, but also fluid mobile practices has methodological implications. Both call for research that is drawn from the lived experience of phenomena. These implications are explored further in Chapter 3.

## 2.3 Rationale for Study

Chapter 2 has located the research within current academic and policy debates and discourse. Furthermore, it has introduced the concepts of the everyday, dwelling and Lefebvre's spatial triad to the view of creating research that is embodied, embedded and attentive to the fluid, messy world of lived experience.

In response to the literature review, I propose a more nuanced view of the relationship between artists and urban space. As ACE (2014), Evans (2009) Tonkiss (2013) and Oakley (2004) contend, research focused on the formal interventions in urban space reinforces the idea that art is something to be housed in (often-funded) purposive buildings. In this narrow focus, we miss the numerous urban spaces that are quietly and incrementally in the process of becoming. The notion of a Creative City has overwhelmed both policy makers and academics at the expense of alternative strategies and nuanced empirical evidence. Policy remains divorced from both theory (Pawson 2002) and empirical evidence (Evans 2009).

Offering an alternative to the clean Creative City script, interstitial space, and "disrupts the flattering, aestheticized, efficient image the city has of itself, but not from an external point of view – such a competing image of the city or an alternative program" (Le Strat 2007). Framed in this way interstitial place is about "operating in the cracks between formal planning, speculative investment and local possibilities" (Hodkinson 2012) and "finding the weaknesses, the joins, the blindspots and inconsistencies in a given strategy or settlement and working both against and within them" (Tonkiss 2013:316).

Furthermore, the biological etymology of the word 'interstitial' reflects the current claims that the city is analogous to an organism or ecology. Describing it as such

suggests certain characteristics; inherent fragility and interdependence (Giannachi and Stewart 2005; Walmsley 2016) but also a fluidity that continually reshapes the way in which people, materials, ideas and resources come together. If the city is an organism (Lynch (1984, Landry 2008) then interstitial places are the connective tissues between imagination and agency allowing for inventive urban practice. Interventions in urban space can never be seen as acts of tabula rasa (Deslandes 2013), rather heterogeneous and diverse, messy and vital. Additionally, it stresses the human agency in creating urban space. The interstitial does not exist independently – it is 'brought into being' – "realized and modulated according to the (lived, perceived) intensity of its creations and experiments" (Le Strat 2007). It is a relational space created out of co-operations and alliances among participants (Le Strat 2007).

I want to respond to these normative ideas and move away from generalizing the different practices, materialities and infrastructures that characterize these spaces. Furthermore, I want to create research that is attentive to the informal and precarious set of embodied practices that these spaces engender. The aim is to draw attention to artists' experiences of place, however messy and complex this might be.

## 2.4 Research Questions and Aims

In recent years, the body of literature on creative cities has grown, yet we have little research that draws directly from the experiences of artists themselves within artist-led space. I would argue that this is related to the fact that the everyday life of artists in urban space remains under researched. This means we lack an understanding of how

embodied practices are influenced by and extend beyond the borders of the studio or gallery space. James writes how,

> "Experience as we know, has ways of boiling over and making us correct our present formulas"
>
> (James 1907:106).

The literature highlights a call for research that is participatory, empathic and embodied (ACE 2014, Walmsley 2016, Merrifield 2000). This research calls for a unique level of access, to enmesh the researcher and researched towards a new form of meaning making that is entirely participatory. To explore the everyday, embodied experience of participation and the *consequences* of participation through an appreciation of the thoughts, feelings and experiences of those who are participating.

Adams (2014) notes how that, in doing phenomenological research we are always 'too late' and are therefore unable to access the object of our interest. A focus on the internal organisational form, ideology and output *only once* the space has been moulded means little exploration of the processes by which artists define, inhabit, manipulate, dominate and eventually vacate space. I wanted to explore the formation, and dissolution, of space and how this process affects artistic practice. Whilst the dwelling perspective is largely absent from the literature on artist-led spaces, it provides a useful framework for understanding the complex processes through which artists inhabit interstitial space.

This participatory research allowed me to respond to a noted gap in the literature involving the everyday of artist-run organisations, especially those located within interstitial space. Whilst the creative sector has by definition "a bifurcated structure, comprising a few extremely large organisations and many thousands of micro-

enterprises, or self-employed, single person businesses" (Pratt et al 2013:3) larger organisations quickly dominate any conversation concerning urban space and artistic practice to the detriment of sole traders and freelancers. In addition, further analysis of the arts literature suggests a London-centric focus with little in depth interrogation of the situation regionally. This research provided the opportunity to contextualise artistic practice within an increasingly fragmented, precarious urban space in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Given these noted gaps in the current research, I have pursued the following interrelated research aims:

- To investigate the re-appropriation of urban sites left empty by disuse or disinvestment for inventive artistic practice.
- To explore the process of spatial creation within interstitial space: how artists imagine, transform, negotiate and vacate space.
- To gain an understanding of the everyday of artists within these interstitial spaces
- To explore the recursive relationship to the built environment that interstitial space engenders
- To situate this interstitial space within wider narratives of culture-led regeneration and the Creative City.
- To map the wider structures that promote or constrain artistic practice in the city.
- To explore the movement, and rationale for movement, of artists within and between spaces of artistic production

In remaining attentive to these research aims, I intended to produce research that is both embedded and embodied, grounded in the lives and processes of being and becoming. These aims have informed three main research questions:

- How can we utilise an increased understanding of the everyday practices of artists to extend the conceptualisation of artist-led interstitial spaces within the UK?
- How does our understanding of interstitial artist-led spaces add to current conceptualisations of the Creative City?
- How do external factors and individual agency intertwine and interlock in the construction, habitation and vacation of artist-led interstitial spaces?

# Chapter Three

# 3. Methodology and Methods

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological response to the literature review and the questions and aims of this thesis. It also contains a more in-depth discussion of the sites of research; namely Ouseburn Valley and the East Pilgrim Street Block (EPSB) in Newcastle upon Tyne. I conclude the chapter by outlining the process of data gathering and analysis.

The 'call to action' outlined in the previous chapter, as well as an in-depth review of extant literature provided the justification for adopting a qualitative design based on participant observation (De Walt and De Walt 2011, Jorgensen 1989, Park, Burgess & McKenzie 1984, Spradley 1980). This was guided by an understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology (HP) which, I would argue, privileges the co-creation of data within

the research process. Furthermore, it enabled me to couple the phenomenology of 'everydayness' with hermeneutic interpretations and renderings.

Highmore writes that "'method' is not the name of some 'tool-kit', some series of procedures or protocols to be performed" (Highmore, 2006:2). Whilst practitioners of participant observation have resisted developing definitive procedures and techniques (Jorgensen 1989), data for this research was collected through field notes, photographs, found materials (Stake 2005) and, in the latter stages, go-along interviews (Kusenbach 2003, Evans and Jones 2011) across multiple sites. This was an iterative, slow process involving long periods of reflection away from the field, and constant re-working of both my role and relationships within it. The aim of the first section of this chapter is to locate the physical site of research, namely Ouseburn Valley and the East Pilgrim Street Block.

## 3.2 Section One: Research Locations

Atkinson (1992) writes, "the field is produced, not discovered through the social transactions engaged in by the ethnographer. The boundaries of the field are not 'given'. They are the outcome of what the ethnographer may encompass in his or her gaze; what he or she may negotiate with hosts and informants; and what the ethnographer omits and overlooks as much as what the ethnographer writes (Atkinson 1992:9). This section aims to illuminate how I outlined the 'boundaries' of the research, both physically and temporally, my rationale for inclusion and how I negotiated sustained access.

### 3.2.1 Researching Multiple Sites

The first aim in researching multiple sites was to address the boundaries of previous research. From an extensive review of the literature, I perceived two distinct gaps in current research. Firstly, the creative sector has by definition "a bifurcated structure, comprising a few extremely large organisations and many thousands of micro-enterprises, or self-employed, single person businesses" (Pratt et al 2013:3). However, current focus leans towards larger organisations: the Arts Council document references creative behemoths such as The Sage Gateshead and Tate but no small or micro organisations that are perhaps outside the scope of existing research. Further analysis also suggests a London-centric focus with little in depth interrogation of the situation regionally. Knowing that I wanted to explore spaces of artistic production, aside from the larger institutions, my research provided the opportunity to contextualise artistic practice within an increasingly fragmented, precarious urban sphere. Furthermore, the literature highlighted a call for research that is participatory, empathic and embodied (ACE 2014, Walmsley 2016, Merrifield 2000). This research calls for a unique level of access, to enmesh the researcher and researched towards a new form of meaning making that is entirely participatory. Acknowledging these research gaps, and the unique level of access my prior working relationships allowed, led me to research phenomena closer to home in the city centre of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Pragmatically, researching close to home meant I had quick access to events, meetings and rehearsals. It also meant that I operated in the same networks as the block's residents, often meeting them by chance in a bar or café. In this way, the research spilled out of the physical site, removing some of the boundaries other researchers

might have experienced. Whilst I did not record these meetings specifically, they did add to the overall picture of how these artists live and work in Newcastle's urban spaces.

The boundary of the physical site of research was harder to locate. At the scoping stage I had realised that in attempting to opportunistically trace "a complex cultural phenomenon" it was, in fact "contingent and malleable as one traces it" (Marcus 1995:96). As the phenomena was both manifold and shifting, I was hesitant to delimit the amount of physical sites too early for fear of inadvertently occluding or omitting vital information. Indeed, single sited research is "far too limited where cultural formations and objects of study are discontinuous, and the product of complex circulations" (Marcus 1999:10). Instead, I aimed to locate each site within a wider urban context, rather than study them in isolation from the rest of the city. In choosing multiple sites, what I have attempted to do is portray both the physical locations but also the network of relationships more immediately surrounding the artists, both locally and translocally; the patterns of collaboration, competition and division of labour which organize their daily activities, formally or informally (Hannerz 2003). In this, the relationships between sites are addressed as much as the relationships within. This reflected my wider aim towards research that uses 'thick description' to place phenomena into a wider context, in order to understand and explore all of the various meanings behind it (Holliday 2007). I took the work of Hugh Gusterson (1997) as an influence, seeing myself embedded within a collection of "polymorphous engagements" (Gusterson 1997:116). That is interacting with participants across the sites, collecting data eclectically from different sources.

This embedded form of research aims to “take the reader to the centre of an event, experience or action, providing an in-depth study of the context and the reasons, intentions, understandings and motivations that surround that experience of occurrence” (Mansvelt & Berg 2005:260). Criticism has been directed at this form of embedded, one city research for its focus on the vernacular to the detriment of possible global implications. However, I follow Blok (2010) in opposing the ontological dichotomy created by the continuing debates on the local and the global. Rather, he argues the local is where the global is produced and reproduced. Therefore, the researcher should commit to the study of little mobilities that, nevertheless, unfold the global (Blok 2010). As Strathern (2005) writes, “if one can ask 'big' questions of 'small' data, then the difference between big and small disappears” (Strathern 2005:20). Artist-led spaces are phenomena that is entirely local, each bearing the traces of its own locality, but also globally reproduced. This phenomenon - artists taking advantage of empty offices - is nothing new or novel. What, for this research, was novel was the opportunity to investigate the phenomena from such an acute angle.

### 3.2.2 Site Selection

Consequently, multi-site ethnography almost always entails a selection of sites from among those many which could potentially be included (Hannerz 2003). I selected both Ouseburn and East Pilgrim Street Block (EPSB) for the practical and theoretical rationale outlined above, but also due to certain particularities that added depth and insight to my research concerns. Ouseburn and EPSB were chosen initially as they presented a rare opportunity to explore the re-appropriation of urban sites left empty by disuse or disinvestment for inventive artistic practice. Furthermore, they offered the opportunity to study different articulations of the same phenomena at different

stages in their development. Together they represented two different temporalities within the same city, one periphery and one core.

*Figure 3: Map of Newcastle upon Tyne with research sites highlighted. EPSB (yellow) and Ouseburn (pink)*

Furthermore, both sites were at a crucial juncture in regards to future development. Ouseburn, with creative companies founded in the empty space left by the retraction of industry, were encountering the encroaching development of 76 new homes affecting both the availability and usability of creative space in the valley. Meanwhile EPSB, populated by artists in empty offices left by the 2009 recession, were threatened with certain eviction and demolition. Both demonstrated a perpetually evolving character that was dynamic and shifting, from agricultural to industrial and now creative uses. By being present as these changes unfolded, I could deal with the criticism in research that we are always 'too late' to fully experience phenomena (Adams 2014). However, whilst Ouseburn and EPSB shared this recent planned reconstruction they differed in many other ways. Their locations within the city: Ouseburn on the peripheries and EPSB in the city centre, different levels of stability offered, the multiple and varied practices of the residents. Combined, they presented a range of practice that allowed me to explore phenomena from different perspectives.

My research began in Space Six on the sixth floor of Commercial Union House in October 2015. As time progressed, I attempted to bring more sites into the research, assuming that the shifting, often precarious nature of practice would mean some would become more significant, whilst others would yield too little data or, in some cases, cease to exist. During this stage, I realised that each of the sites were at differing stages of development. Whilst I did not set out for parity of data gathering across sites, I felt some aspects of the enquiry were best answered through focusing on EPSB. Specifically questions concerning the ability of residents to imagine and form their environment. Understanding the formation of these spaces is important when the focus of previous academic enquiry has been events after artists move on (gentrification, re-vivication, and regeneration). EPSB offered an opportunity to reflect on the transformative moments when space becomes open to change. Conversely, Ouseburn, in part, had been formalised by the development of residential housing and plans for future development. In Ouseburn I felt that I had missed the, for want of a better word, 'tipping point' and that the space was no longer in a process of 'becoming'. Therefore focusing my attention on the residents of EPSB would allow me to experience *alongside* participants the formation, growth and final destruction of artist-led spaces. With this in mind, the empirical chapters focus on the lived experiences of artists within EPSB. The data gathered in Ouseburn through go-alongs with residents informs this, adding historical context to the activities in EPSB whilst also highlighting the differences between two sites of artistic production that are geographically similar but temporally different.

Further site selections were made gradually and cumulatively as new insights or opportunities developed. 'Site' here meaning new organisations or participants within EPSB. My method of bringing new sites into the research was opportunistic, based on

connections/word of mouth. This fluidity meant "individual cases in the collection may or may not be known in advance to manifest some common characteristic…They are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorising" (Stake 2005:446). I did not initially set a minimum or maximum amount of sites, interviewees or particular gender balance within EPSB. This resulted from a desire to capture the fluid, ephemeral nature of the phenomena in the moment, rather than a pre-determined end point. Instead, I depended on residents inviting me into their workspaces to 'hang out', work or talk as my time in the field progressed. In this way, I had little direction over this part of the process as I could not justifiably force artists to allow me access, or even engage with me. The priority was developing relationships with residents rather than the 'Blitzkrieg Ethnography' proposed by Rist (1980).

In total, the process of data collection for this research spanned from October 2015 to October 2016. Whilst I did not wholly subscribe to the idea stemming from Wolcott (1988) that researchers should aim to experience a 'full cycle of activity' in the field, my aim was to be present as events unfolded. I anticipated that in-depth understanding could not be manufactured quickly but would grow and evolve through 'deep hanging out' (Geertz 1998). Although neither the residents of East Pilgrim Street nor I were aware of it at the time, my year in the field began at a critical juncture in the life of the spaces, being constituted and constituently forming a countdown of sorts towards the final eviction and scheduled demolition of the block.

### 3.2.3 Site Overview

This section presents greater detail on the sites of research, including information on their formation, range of practices and example images. Through this, it aims to locate both initial sites within a social, cultural and historical context that adds further detail and depth. The images are included to be indicative of built form rather than an attempt to encapsulate the entire site.

#### 3.2.3.1 Ouseburn Valley

Ouseburn Valley (referred to as Ouseburn, *the* Ouseburn or Ouseburn Valley) is a ward of Newcastle upon Tyne in the North East of England. It runs upstream from the mouth of the Ouseburn following the ridge of the valley into a steep descent to the mouth of the river. The valley was shaped by its industrial heritage; by the end of the 19th century, it accommodated glassworks, potteries, shipbuilding, tanners, sawmills and tailors amongst others. By the 1960's the characteristics that had aided its industrial development were obsolete due to improvements to road and rail. Until the 1970's the valley was a cluster of heavy industry and housing. The residential community was rehoused and the heavy industry replaced by smaller craft and creative businesses. Disused industrial buildings began to be utilised as creative workspaces. This began with a derelict warehouse at 36 Lime Street (now Lime Street Studios). The valley now contains five artist studios (Blank Studios, Biscuit Tin Studios, Cobalt, Mushroom Works and within Hoults Yard) alongside recording studios and office space for digital and creative businesses in the Toffee Factory. A number of live music venues and pubs surrounds these, including The Cluny, Tyne Bar and the infamous Free Trade Inn. The Ouseburn Trust was formed in 1996 as a 'landlord and a developer' (their words) to oversee the future development of the valley. Now

designated a cultural ‘hub’ (Newcastle City Council 2012) the valley has studios, rehearsal rooms, and a farm but is gaining a residential community (The Malings) through 76 new homes.

#### 3.2.3.2 East Pilgrim Street Block

Geographically, The East Pilgrim Street Block begins at NewBridge Street West in the North and covers the area south to Market Street. This forms a sizable block of land within the city centre. Historically, Pilgrim Street formed the main medieval thoroughfare through the city, winding from the Pilgrim Gate in the town walls. An influx of new development in the late 20th century culminated in the new buildings that are now our focus. Comprising Norham House, Commercial Union House and Bamburgh House, what began as a pop-up gallery in an abandoned shop front now houses over 400 individual artists and organizations. These are diverse spaces, not just in terms of the varied mix of artistic practices but in the spaces themselves. Old office space, basements, a secret gentlemen’s club and multiple shop fronts have been repurposed for gallery, theatre and studio spaces.

Although identified as part of Newcastle City Council’s ‘Urban Core’ regeneration plan (Newcastle City Council 2016), actual ground breaking had been delayed several times. Both the economic downturn, reduction in funding and ‘red tape’ has been blamed for the lack of development to what has been deemed a ‘key gateway to the city’. The site is now the subject of a new regeneration scheme that seeks to develop the block for retail, leisure and commercial use creating what the council refer to as a ‘retail circuit’ encouraging shoppers to leave the larger commercial spaces of Eldon Square and spread their spending throughout the city centre. Whilst current residents

were always aware their time was limited, news came through at the end of my fieldwork (October 2016) that notice for demolition had been received for Norham House. On the 6th March 2017, the residents of the NewBridge Project, Alphabetti Theatre and Makerspace left Norham House to another temporary space in Carliol House. This was negotiated by GVA, a commercial property agent and the same management team who had placed them in Norham House in 2010. At the time of writing, the old Odeon building that borders Commercial Union House on Pilgrim Street is in the process of being dismantled. New scaffolding has appeared around Norham House signalling the start of demolition for another building in the block.

#### 3.2.3.3 Norham House

Vacated by accountants and solicitors, the empty building was taken over by two recent art graduates (referred to in this thesis by their initials W and W) in 2010. Using £5,000 of money earmarked by the council for pop-up shops to revitalise the high street (the scheme popularised by Mary Portas) they formed the ground floor into a gallery space on a three-month lease. When regeneration plans for the building further stalled, they negotiated the lease of the remainder of the building, transforming it in to artist studios and a co-work space on the first floor. It now contains an artist-led community comprising of over 80 artist studios, an exhibition space and bookshop. Adjacent to the ground floor gallery an old retail space is now MakerSpace; a separate community run workshop providing facilities for a wide range of programmers, makers, creatives and engineers. In the basement, Alphabetti Theatre have carved out a performance space with a small bar.

#### 3.2.3.4 Bamburgh House

Situated on the southeast corner of the block, Bamburgh House is an imposing 9-storey tower of black glass. Formerly office space, since 2015 it has been occupied by Breeze Creatives and converted into studio space for individual artists and creative organisations. The first two floors have now been converted into project spaces for rehearsals and performances. The old Venue nightclub on the ground floor has been taken over by VAMOS!, the production team behind an annual festival of Latin American culture, for their first foray into a situated events space.

#### 3.2.3.5 Commercial Union House

An imposing concrete behemoth, Commercial Union House juts out onto Pilgrim Street on the west edge of the block. Using the same intermediary as the NewBridge project, the owners of Vane Gallery – who until this point been renting office space in Norham House – negotiated a lease for the entire seven floors of Commercial Union House. Unlike Bamburgh and Norham House, Commercial Union House was split, with a different organisation working from each floor. Vane Gallery occupy the first floor, the second floor houses The Hub, an arts service for learning disabled adults in Newcastle upon Tyne. The third is run by B&D Studios, offering individual studio spaces for predominantly visual artists alongside a larger event space. Interestingly, the artists who have now expanded into Breeze Creatives in Bamburgh House founded B&D. Ampersand Inventions run the fourth floor, offering both studio space, a small gallery and four meeting rooms for hire.

The fifth floor is home to The Northern Charter, a series of artist studios and a project space. The sixth is run by Space Six, offering rehearsal rooms and both office and storage space for performing artists. Commercial Union House's seventh floor once

housed the Northern Constitutional Club, home of the oldest political club in the city. The labyrinthine series of lounges and dancefloor accessed by a private lift are now run by art organisation Locus+.

### 3.2.4 Summary

This section has provided a rationale for researching multiple sites. In doing so, I aimed to respond to the current focus on larger organisations and a London-centric focus with little in depth interrogation of the situation regionally. My research provided the opportunity to contextualise artistic practice within an increasingly fragmented, precarious urban sphere.

This section also discussed the selection of research sites in relation with the central concerns of the research: namely, a response to perceived gaps in the literature concerning artist-led spaces and embodied experience. The following section will examine the philosophical and methodological stances in greater detail to demonstrate their interrelationship with the approaches used in data acquisition and analysis. Consideration is also given to the ethical implications of this work.

## 3.3 Section Two: Research Paradigms and Methodological Considerations

### 3.3.1 Hermeneutic Phenomenology and the Hermeneutic Circle

One of the foremost writers on Hermeneutic Phenomenology (HP), Van Manen, wrote that the "researcher tries to enter the lifeworld of the person whose experiences are relevant study material…the best way to enter is to participate" (Van Manen 1990:69).

However, with participatory qualitative research "there is no off-the-shelf formula, step-by-step method, or 'correct" way to do participatory research. Rather, a participatory qualitative methodology is best described as "a set of principles and a process of engagement in the inquiry" (Sohng, 2005:76).

This idea of a 'set of principles' rather than a step by step method to guide the research led me to explore the concept of hermeneutic phenomenology (HP). Broadly speaking, HP is concerned with the meaning of being. Taking from Heidegger's critical work, Being and Time (1927) our *Da-sein* (being, or 'being-there') is always situated and temporal. Therefore, our *being-in-the-world* is contextualised by existent interpretive relationships with objects and things (Heidegger 1927). Human experience is formed and re-formed by this interpretation of the world: the "unfolding of our tacit, lived self-understanding. Heidegger's term, *Auslegung*, literally means 'laying out'" (Pattison 2002:109).

This sense making is situated and temporal but, Heidegger reasons, is framed by the notion of 'historicity'. For Heidegger, our interpretive ability to make sense of our being-in-the-world is framed by knowledge we have developed in advance, a fore-having or fore-sight that is developed through past experience, or 'historicity'. Ontologically, this means that a pre-understanding of culture, practice, background, and language shapes all interpretation (Guba and Lincoln 1989). Heidegger reasons that, as social beings, we can understand something through relating it to other things in its existing environment as well as its past and its future. Seymour writes how for Heidegger "We are not reducible to our present situation: we are in the midst of our possibilities, and we project them (entwirft) them all the time. This is never static; becoming who we are requires interpretation, not only of ourselves but also of inherent

possibilities in the world. No account can be given of a human being without reference to what he or she is in the process of becoming" (Seymour 2006:146).

This notion of a journey is a key concept in this research as well as the approach to HP and to the hermeneutic circle. It is a process, a cycle, whereby understanding emerges in a circular manner moving from the relationship of parts to the whole and back to the parts. Figure 4 below attempts to express this. In this cycle, there is no concrete truth to be arrived at, or uncovered. "Truth" in HP is an interpretive construct. Epistemologically, this means considering what is being interpreted, the process of interpretation as well as the role of the interpreter. It means acknowledging the importance of both the participants, and the researcher's historical context.

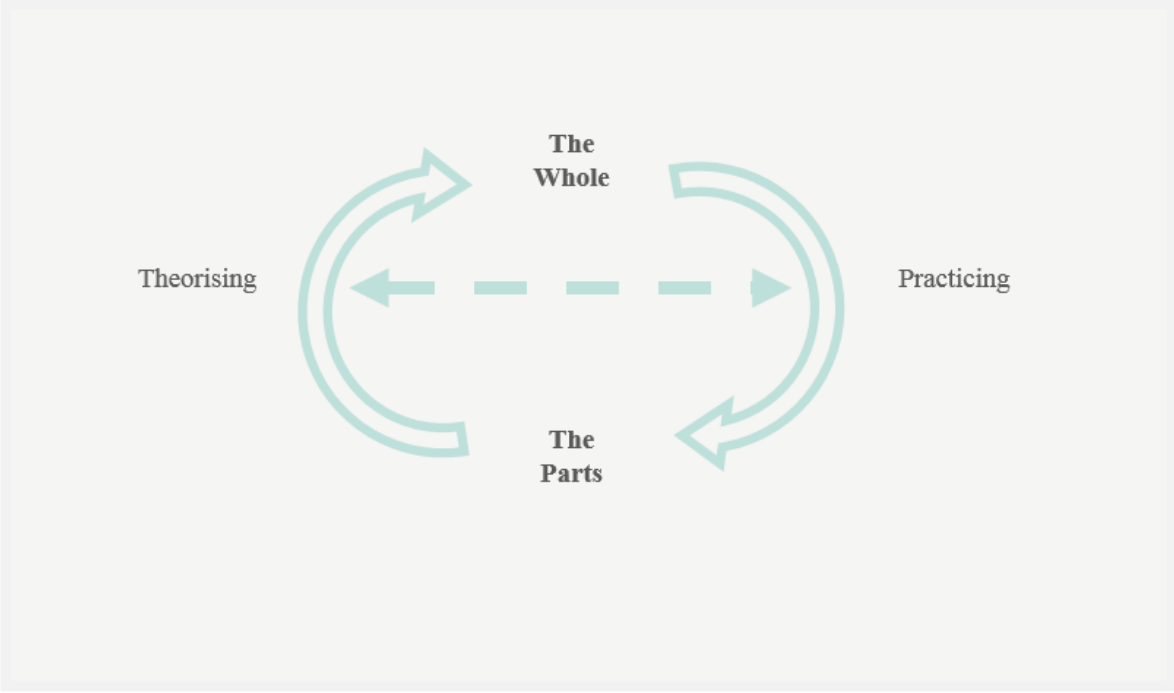


*Figure 4: The Hermeneutic Circle*

Although widely seen in psychology (Giorgi 1975, 1997), education (Van Manen 1990, 2002 Adams 2014) and certain aspects of tourism (Pons 2003, Pernecky & Jamal 2010) HP remains an under-used tool for understanding lived experience. A review of the HP literature in the arts revealed extremely few studies focusing predominantly on

its role in art therapy (Betensky 1977, Carpendale 2002, 2008). However, I take the view that HP can be extended to my own research on arts and the urban. Theoretically, the subject matter of this thesis lends itself to an enquiry based on the principles of HP. Artistic practices are, by their nature, hermeneutic practices; being open to multiple or ambiguous interpretations. HP draws attention not only to the object (the book, the canvas, the pen) but also to our way of "seeing" the objects and the world (Cerbone 2014). This 'seeing' is affected by the historicity – or, the historical context – of both the object and the viewer. Nevertheless, they are also never static: an artwork tours galleries, a song or play is performed multiple times but changes imperceptibly with each repetition. I saw a commonality between Lefebvre's circle and the hermeneutic circle as in it is always in a state of flux. A continual, shifting process based on meaning making between several parties. Furthermore, art is wholly an embodied practice, and therefore adopting a more positivistic outlook would leave the research open to a critique of disembodiment and Cartesian dualism (separating mind/consciousness from the body).

Methodologically, I would refer to HP more as an influence guiding the data collection. This was predominantly as there is not a concrete 'process of engagement': indeed, unlike some other qualitative methodologies, hermeneutic phenomenology has no set procedures, techniques or concepts that govern the research process (Van Manen 1990). Instead, the researcher must find the 'how' of how to do research anew with each study (ibid). Rather than giving me a tool kit that lent itself to completing the research in a processual fashion, HP allowed me to approach the research with a 'phenomenological eye' (Van Manen 1990) as I attempted to illuminate the lived experience of residents within East Pilgrim Street in Newcastle upon Tyne. As with Heidegger's work, I wanted to provide a situated, embodied account of what it is to be

an artist in these communities; with both recognition of a past and anticipation of a future.

Van Manen (1990) wrote that a study using HP "aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences … it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectivity, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (Van Manen, 1990:9). Following in this line, I used HP in the field as a way of 'stepping back' and 'slowing down'. That is, attempting to describe the spaces and their residents (the phenomena) as they appeared in the everyday before theorizing, interpreting or analysing in depth. Holding the idea of the hermeneutic circle in my mind, I was able to go back and forth from the literature to inform what I experienced in the field in an iterative process.

I drew from the work of Heidegger (1996) rather than Husserl owing to a belief that the essence of a phenomenon cannot be separated from its context and mechanisms of interpretation: observation and interpretation are not separate but happen contemporaneously. For researchers, Husserlian phenomenology involves phenomenological reduction or bracketing: suspending or excluding "all questions and claims concerning whatever might be casually responsible for conscious experience" (Cerbone 2014:22). In contrast, HP allowed me to explore how these experiences come about, and how they are interpreted through a participant's socio-cultural-historical background. It was necessary to regard the phenomena as it appeared in the moment, but also to consider the contextual factors that shape understanding. Being-in-the-world involves being-there but also having been there, and there and there. I could not "bracket out" the prior experiences of my participants or myself. Preconceptions, for both participants and researcher, are positive in that they provide

a frame of reference rather than acting as a distorting bias (Heidegger 1927/1962; Gadamer 1997; Arnold and Fischer 1994).

In choosing to draw from HP, I could not "bracket" myself out of the process but participate with interest and empathy. The fieldwork, as Gadamer writes, "binds the two partners … when a translator interprets a conversation, he [sic] can make a mutual understanding possible only if he participates in the subject under discussion; so also in relationship to a text it is indispensable that the interpreter participates in its meaning" (Gadamer, 1997:389). Internalising this, I approached the fieldwork as a collaborative experience, where any data produced was the result of dialogic co-construction.

### 3.3.2 Ethnography

As a researcher I have approached this thesis with the goal of understanding the complex and messy word of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt 1994). This research follows an interpretivist paradigm; this assumes that the world is co-constructed and that epistemological interactions between researcher and subject, between "knower and known are inseperable" and so is the knowledge created (Lincoln and Guba 1985:37). Working under these assumptions, 'truth' can be seen as a product of social processes, constantly reworked by social interaction.

Adopting ethnography was a means to align my own research goals with a methodology that is attentive to the process of co-construction. Whilst their remains a significant amount of debate over what the term 'ethnography' entails (Hammersley 2006) I use the term to refer to a form of social research that emphasises the importance of direct involvement with the particular phenomena of interest. Direct involvement

in the everyday experience of artists provided a strategy for gaining access to phenomena that are most often observed from the view of a nonparticipant. Whilst being ‘directly involved’ did not guarantee that the data would be co-constructed, it did lend empathy to the process and allow access to “the 'private talk' which discloses meanings that are absent from 'public talk': to hear an authentic voice that might tell of things subversive, rather than the socially sanitized account” (Cornwall 2016:75). The importance of contextual factors in arts research cannot be overstated: artistic practices are always situated and embedded.

Although closely aligned, I did not see this research as occupying a classical ethnographic space. Rather, I used ethnography as a means to practise research that puts the focus on studying what people say and do in particular contexts. As Agar (1980) contends “Ethnography is not simply 'data collection'; it is rich in implicit theories of culture, society and the individual" (Agar 1980:23). Its adoption was a means to explore the myriad of tiny acts that make up this lifeworld whilst simultaneously situating research within wider conceptual frameworks.

### 3.3.3 Participant Observation

A focus on ethnographic research that is gathered through a process of co-construction led me to adopt Participant Observation (PO). In doing so I aimed to address the call for work that is “inductive, emerging and shaped by the researcher’s experiences in collecting and analysing data … from the ground up, rather than handed down entirely from a theory” (Creswell 2012:61). This call has been clearly stated in the literature review; moreover Arts Council England (ACE) stressed the need for more in-depth participatory research (ACE 2014). Walmsley (2016) echoes this calling for arts

research that renegotiates the traditional relationship between researcher and researched, "thinking-with" rather than "thinking-on" participants. This involves "hanging out more….getting to know them as people" (Walmsley 2016:15).

Broadly, PO is defined as "establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in the setting" (Emerson 2002:352). I followed DeWalt and DeWalt's (2002) lead in adopting PO as a tactic to investigate situated phenomena through shared experience. In acknowledging that meaning making is the result of this shared experience (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002, Spradley 1980), PO locates the researcher within the physical and conceptual 'sites' of research. Combining the principles of HP with PO there is the recognition that this conceptual 'site' is not discovered but is actively constructed between researcher and researched. It is a relational space. This interrelationship extends across the physical sites involving embodied as well as visual and verbal interactions. In participating 'with' rather than 'on' the subject of research PO acknowledges the researcher's role in collaborative meaning making; a role that is exploratory and empathic. Furthermore, in addressing phenomena from the 'ground-up' PO reduces the distance between researcher and researched that creates a hierarchy of knowledge.

Van Manen writes, the "researcher tries to enter the lifeworld of the person whose experiences are relevant study material … the best way to enter is to participate" (Van Manen, 1990:69). This notion of distance between researcher and researched is problematic when addressing phenomena from the 'ground-up'. This requires access to the 'ground' in question, namely the physical site of research. Therefore, I chose

PO to inform a situated, embodied account of both being and becoming an artist in these spaces. Practically, this meant entering in and actually taking part in the so**c**ial life and social processes in question. My aim was towards what Geertz (1998) has called 'deep hanging out' – situated long-term close-in field research where embodied as well as visual and verbal interactions are significant. I also wanted to pay particular attention to the artwork that was being produced in these spaces. Implicating the art-form as a sign of cultural construction, Inglis (2005:90) makes the point that "'art', far from floating free in some ethereal realm 'above' everyday concerns, is always part of society and connected to what people do on an everyday basis". In as much as we continue to build culture, it makes sense that our ideas about art also "remain assemblages that can be dismantled through time, space, and human action" (Lewis 2002:13). By drawing on this interpretation, we are able to think about art forms as texts that can be culturally read - as doorways to the questions and ideas of the broader cultural contexts that frame them. In this way, we can interpret art objects and the spaces they inhabit as an activity whereby cultural products are being made by cultural products.

However, art is not just the culmination on canvas or print. Being both spaces of production as well as exhibition, I needed some involvement, and knowledge of that process. By being close in I could observe and participate in the subtle nuances of art making in everyday life. As Jorgensen writes,

> "Direct involvement in the here and now of people's daily lives provides both a point of reference for the logic and process of participant observational enquiry and a strategy for gaining access to phenomena that are commonly observed from the standpoint of a non-participant"
>
> (Jorgensen 1989:9).

To return to Lefebvre, PO recognises that "technocratic planners and programmers cannot produce space with a perfectly clear understanding of cause and effect, motive and implication" (Lefebvre 1991b:37). Rather, adopting PO offered the opportunity to create research that is not removed, or held at arm's length when "quantification risks distorting everyday life realities" (Jorgensen 1989:35). I approached PO as a participatory qualitative methodology where the dynamic that emerged between participant and researcher sets the research agenda (albeit within the existing framework of knowledge about the arts and urban space). Therefore, data collection becomes heuristic, contemporary, momentary and often ephemeral (Tomkins 2014). I also aimed to defend against Adams' (2014) critique that, in doing phenomenological research we are always 'too late' and are therefore unable to access the object of our interest. In the case of Commercial Union House, my aim was to be 'present' as events occurred, able to access 'naturally' unfolding events and 'volunteered' member interpretations (Becker, 1958). This was hugely important considering the temporary, transient nature of the majority of the spaces. Being present in spaces scheduled for demolition in the near future offered unique insight and access into a short-lived disruption of Newcastle's urban fabric.

### 3.3.4 Go Alongs

An approach focusing on Participant Observation allowed me to explore the lived experience of artists in all its messiness and complexity. Ultimately, our desire to understand the embodied experience of working within the spaces, to "make explicit the structure of the lived experience from the viewpoint of those that live the experience" (Van Manen, 1990:77) led to extended conversations with individual artists. Kusenbach (2003) most succinctly describes the rationale behind this

> Because people usually do not comment on 'what is going on' while acting in 'natural' environments, it is difficult to access their concurrent experiences and interpretations through a purely observational approach. On the other hand, conducting sit-down interviews usually keeps informants from engaging in 'natural' activities, typically taking them out of the environments where those activities take place. This makes it difficult to grasp what exactly the subjects are talking about – if they are able and willing to discuss at all what researchers are interested in. In both cases, important aspects of lived experience may either remain invisible, or, if they are noticed, unintelligible. This is especially true for the spatial footing of experience and practices in everyday life
>
> (Kusenbach 2003:459).

Whilst there is no doubt that being a 'resident' within East Pilgrim Street offered unique insight and access I was aware that Participant Observation alone made it difficult to dig down into individuals' experiences and interpretations of their environment. Working in the communal hub, conversations were started only to trail away at the start of a meeting, a rehearsal or, more frequently, the fear of being overheard. Alternatively, sit-down interviews are often static encounters promoting pre-determination and an ingrained power relationship between researcher/researched; something I was keen to avoid.

Ingold writes "in real life, for the most part, we do not perceive things from a single vantage point, but rather by walking around them" (Ingold 2004:331). Having drawn from notion of dwelling there was a need to move beyond the studio space, following phenomena "for we also dwell in the intermediate places, the interplaces, of travel-places which, even when briefly visited or merely traversed, are never uneventful, never not full of spatiotemporal specificities that reflect particular modes and moods of emplacement" (Casey, 1996:39). Wanting to move away from the static set up of both PO and traditional interviewing towards 'following the phenomena' my extended conversations with artists were methodologically similar to the 'go-along' introduced by Kusenbach (2003). In this, the researcher walks with participants as they go about

their daily routines, asking questions along the way. Conversations, as they occur, are loose and unstructured and allowed to unfold in the moment; there is no initial analysis. As a research tool, I hoped this would bring to the foreground some of the more ephemeral and reflexive aspects of lived experience grounded in place.

I would liken these encounters to a go-along (Kusenbach 2003) in three distinct ways. Firstly, they are dynamic; our movements mirrored the rhythm and flows of conversation. Natural pauses came as we climbed stairs or negotiated broken floorboards. In this, I was able to move away from the static encounters in which talking becomes the centre of focus. Instead, the focus expanded to the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and tactile sensations that bring a way of life to life (Adler and Adler, 1994). Furthermore, these mobile encounters allowed me to observe and affectively map the spatial practices by which different places are linked together and make visible the complex and diverse web of connections; their various relationships, groups and hierarchies, as they move from building to building.

Secondly, they were a more intimate way to engage with the spaces and gain privileged insights into both places and self (Solnit 2001). My conversations were opportunistic and varied; lasting minutes to, in some instances, a full afternoon, becoming a form of sustained engagement with their lifeworlds. Only from this privileged position of walking or working 'with' individuals, could I "experience, feel and grasp the textures, smells, comforts and discomforts, pleasures and displeasures of a moving life" (Novoa 2015:99). This privileged position also helped negotiate any small issues of access. After some time in the field, I had noticed that a large portion of the working day took place behind the closed doors of studios. By being 'with' individuals, I could explore some of the hidden practices I did not, or could not see in the communal working

spaces. As Highmore reiterates, "'method' is not the name of some 'tool-kit', some series of procedures or protocols to be performed" (Highmore 2006:2). The go alongs, in this sense, were an adaptation to what the field presented rather than aiming to fit my findings into a prescribed method.

Finally, they are 'situated' – that is they take place contemporaneously with the phenomena in question, whilst being 'within' it – both physically, and temporally. This leads on from the pragmatic method for interviews suggested by Thompson et al. (1989) in which the researcher should aim to obtain a first person description of a specific experience by providing the context in which the respondent can freely discuss their experiences. Studying this 'situatedness' allowed me access to the ways in which individual artists create, negotiate and define their space. Again, as with PO the focus is on 'being there' or 'being present' in the physical and emotional sense. The ability to capture feelings and experiences in-situ allows for a physical co-presence that aids the collaborative research process. Furthermore, it allows the exploration of phenomena in the immediacy of events, again dealing with the criticism that we are always 'too late'.

Additionally, I saw the go-alongs as a more systematic version of the 'deep hanging out', allowing me to verify any observations I had made against the artists' individual experiences. In this way, the go-alongs offered the potential to transform the everyday activity of the residents into researchable material. As Becker (1958: 657) points out, social scientists should not only strive to collect many instances of an identified phenomenon but also seek to gather 'many kinds of evidence' to enhance the validity of a particular conclusion and that "strengths and advantages of participant

observation, interviewing and go-alongs accumulate when they are pursued in combination" (Kusenbach 2003:465).

Conversations were recorded with a Dictaphone app on my phone. I chose this approach for two reasons. Firstly, the presence of a mobile phone would be less jarring than a specific recording device. Secondly, recording the go-alongs meant I was free to concentrate on the temporal, ephemeral nature of the conversation and did not need to interrupt the flow of the conversation to make written notes. After ascertaining at the start of the conversation that they felt comfortable being recorded, I would hide my phone away in a pocket. I felt the presence of a mobile phone created an atmosphere in which participants felt uncomfortable, and was a constant reminder that this was 'research' and not just a conversation. What, in most interview situations, could be viewed as pitfalls (the presence of background noise for example) created a new focus on the incidentals of space that add detail and richness to the research.

### 3.3.5 Ethics

It is impossible to discuss the insider/outsider and overt/covert dichotomies without some acknowledgement of the ethical implications that surround them. It is also impossible to discuss ethics without acknowledging how ethics affects how we design and conduct research. Embedded and other forms of participatory research are inherently 'ethical' insofar as they are based on knowledge sharing aiming at reducing or equalising the hierarchy of knowledge that traditional methods dictate (Lewis and Russell 2011). The aim, therefore, was to not only follow the ethical guidelines of my institution, but to embed 'ethical thinking' throughout my research. Through constant reflection and a sensitivity towards both my participants and their experiences, I formed my research around an 'ethical mind-set' (Issa & Pick 2010). This was an

embodied activity focused on an appreciation of, reflection about, and actions on situations as they developed in a way that both reflected my institutions and my own personal beliefs on ethical research conduct.

Regarding institutional approval, the Business and Law Faculty Research Ethics Committee approved my research in its final iteration on the 21st October 2015. Following this approval, and before starting my fieldwork, I spoke informally with the directors of my two main locations about the nature and aims of my research. I explained that I was interested in how artists make and experience urban space, specifically in the temporary reclamation of derelict or disregarded spaces for creative 'meanwhile' use. Furthermore, how they have been, or might be affected by the application of formal planning practices on these informal spaces. This explanation was important, as I wanted to distance the research from other evaluations of the spaces done by council officials and landowners. I detailed how the research would involve participant observation of the routines and interactions within the space, making notes on what occurs, when and with whom. I felt it was important to re-iterate that any participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time. This would also mean that any data involving them, or created by their interactions would be discounted.

Following this explanation I received approval from both sites to 'be present' for a period of up to a year. I was fortunate that they did not dictate the terms of my presence, leaving the decisions of how I positioned myself and engaged with the space open. The ephemerality and size of the spaces meant that it was unfeasible to gain informed consent from everyone. Residents used many of the spaces on an ad-hoc basis, leaving them empty for weeks and even months at a time. However, I did attempt to inform as many residents as possible, placing Participant Protocol sheets in

the entrances and every communal space in the buildings. I felt that this would be the most visible area for disseminating the structure of my research to the majority of residents. I also hoped that they would prove to be a point of discussion, creating interest around the research. Alongside this, I was fortunate that the director of one of the galleries forwarded the sheet via email to every resident on their mailing list. The sheets (please see Appendix 1 for an example) were designed to give an overview of the purposes behind the study, why these locations had been chosen and the practicalities of being involved. I was also sure to include my contact information if anyone had any further questions or overtly wished not to be included.

Despite the informality of the go-alongs, all interviewees were presented with a participant protocol and consent form to sign. Though the conversations were recorded, all audio files and transcriptions were only accessible by myself and only discussed with my supervisory team. To ensure that the participants were not directly identifiable, initials replace their names. Although, after approval from those involved, organisational names and locations remain in the final text.

### 3.3.6 Reflexivity and Positionality– the reflexive and adaptive researcher

Any consideration of PO and HP, both based on an interpretivist paradigm, leads naturally into a conversation about the positionality of the researcher. Denzin argues that any "interpretative research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher" (Denzin 1986:12). Responsive to the reflexive turn in qualitative research (Foley 2002), this section is included to illuminate my positionality and the way in which both my own 'being-in-the-world' and perception played out in the field, both in relation to others, and within existing culture and power structures (Madison 2012).

Following Kumsa et al. (2015), I maintain that transparency is a crucial element in any ethnography. Texts alone do not express any meaning - readers are a vital element in the interpretation and validation of an ethnography. Therefore, readers need a certain degree of insight into the research process to assess the strength of her or his claims (Reinharz, 2011). This section is included to illuminate my field persona but also act as an extended reflective exercise. In this sense, it is a "confessional tale," an explicit attempt to "demystify fieldwork or participant-observation by showing how the technique is practiced in the field" (Van Maanen 1988:73).

There remains an inclination towards seeing reflexivity as re-iterating the researcher's separation from the research subject. This positions research in any form as an independent endeavour, dismissing the presence and influence of others including the academy (Hardy et al. 2001) and the research participants (Cunliffe 2003). I align myself, and this thesis with Brannan (2011) in acknowledging that any academic work is a collaborative endeavour involving multiple actors. In line with this, I would encourage moving away from a focus on the self towards a reconsideration of selves in relation. Reflexivity here is tied to the overall positioning of this research. In this, it is not an individual phenomenon, but facilitated by a relational ontology in which conceptions of the separate, self-sufficient, independent, rational 'self' or 'individual' are rejected in favour of notions of 'selves-in-relation' or 'relational beings'.

It is important to see reflexivity not as a tokenistic exercise. Several commentators have noted how reflexivity is used as a formulaic afterthought to 'invite trust' on the behalf of the reader. This reduces reflexivity to a panacea to traditional hierarchical research relationships. Following Cunliffe (2003), I want to focus on the intersubjective, relational nature of any research encounter. Realistically, this means

that the self and the other – the researcher and the researched – should not be analysed in isolation, as both are involved in a co-construction of meaning throughout the research process. This co-construction only serves to re-iterate the complex relationship between researcher and researched that cannot be described as straightforward domination of one party over another (Cunliffe 2003:997). The aim is to be explicit in my writing about how 'what we bring to the scene' and 'what we see' might influence or contribute to the research process and therefore the construction of knowledge.

A growing awareness of the researchers' own positionality, often referred to as the 'reflexive turn' (see Emerson 2001), has facilitated a fundamental shift in the ways ethnographers locate themselves within the context of their research and writing (Coffey, 1999). There is a recognition within this of the multiplicity of meaning; that theory is not orientated to grasping one single 'truth' but is a "practical means of going on" (Thrift 1996:304). Furthermore, the production of theory is a social activity that is culturally, socially and historically embedded, resulting in 'situated knowledge's' (Haraway 1991). This is reflective of Heidegger's phenomenology: because we are 'in the world' any experience is perspectival, contextual and situated. Therefore, the researcher must engage in reflexivity, that is reflection on his or her being-in-the-world, or situated-ness.

It is deceptive to argue that my research was a purely inductive endeavour. Whilst positionality "reflects the position that the researcher has chosen to adopt *within* a given research study" (Savin-Baden & Howell Major 2013:71) any discussion is framed by both culturally ascribed (gender, race, nationality) or subjective and contextual experience (life history, work experience) that are formed *before* the

research takes place. I was drawn to this topic of enquiry due to my previous professional role as a visual artist and a series of life events that left me well versed in the temporal, often precarious nature of artistic practice. These prior experiences lent themselves to the study of artist-led spaces by providing me with insight into the particular processes, and language of art making. Initially this was useful in helping me gain access to the field through a number of contacts I had developed through my working practice. Later, I found the self-disclosure of biographical details was useful in helping participants 'place' me, that is make sense of my presence in their world.

During the length of my fieldwork this tension between 'laying bare' my past practice whilst remaining attentive to the research concern had the potential to verge into auto ethnography. My fieldwork, and my position with the field became "nearly schizophrenic in its frenzied multiple focus" (Adler and Adler 1987:70). Practically, I found that being physically present invariably involved taking on a 'role' within the space. For Gold (1958) this 'role' sits somewhere on a continuum between *complete insider* and *complete outsider*. This continuum was useful, as I did not consider being a 'participant' or an 'observer' to be mutually exclusive. Viewing them on continua also helped avoid any dichotomous distinctions that do not address the subtle nuances and changes between researcher and participants during the course of the fieldwork (Atkinson and Hammersley 1993, Snow et. al. 1986). My role was never static, but shifted depending on a variety of contextual factors; the length of time in the field, where I was, who I was talking to, what was happening at the time.

There remained a continual tension between strangeness and over-identification. At first, my experience reflected that of an outsider, I was unfamiliar with the spaces, their inhabitants and the relationships between them. I often became lost, the old office

buildings contained long corridors with many opportunities for wrong turns. This contributed to the feeling the 'initial strangeness' Jorgensen (1989) writes of. This strangeness was useful at the outset; I was removed from the activities and, having some prior knowledge of the spaces, I was able to locate them within, and avoid the separation from, larger contextual factors at play. As Jorgenson notes, "As an outsider you can overview a scene, noting major and distinctive features, relationships, patterns, processes and events" (Jorgensen 1989:56). This was important for two reasons; firstly, it addresses the need for research that reflects on the 'blind spots' (Plows 2008) and taken-for-granted observations of situated research. Furthermore, insiders do not view their world from this standpoint, being already embedded within it. I anticipated that over the course of the fieldwork this initial newness would be replaced with familiarity that would reduce my ability to look at the phenomena holistically.

Creating research that is not removed, or held at arm's length, and that acknowledges the point of view of participants meant negotiating additional, sustained access. Creating an accurate picture of daily life meant being present for a sustained period; as Jorgensen notes "the longer (or more frequently) you are in the setting the more people perceive you as non-threatening and take your presence for granted" (Jorgensen 1989:58). However, as Wolcott insists "time alone provides no guarantee that one has come to know and understand a setting thoroughly" (Wolcott 1985:189). Instead of just being 'present' I also wanted to be 'active' – that is take part in daily life, to create a sense of what Ingold calls "understanding in practice" where "learning is inseparable from doing" (2000:416). I became a resident in order to access the private talk, and tiny acts that make up the everyday - fixing, decorating, emailing, and cleaning. As well as detailed field notes, sensory cues including visual sensations

of light, smell, sound, touch, kinaesthesia, sense of gravity and motion were used to get a 'feel' for a place.

Although I had negotiated consent with residents, I was aware that over time they might have become used to my presence, occluding the fact I was there for the purposes of research. Therefore what was initially an overt position would inevitably shift towards covert (Uldam and McCurdy 2013:947-8). However, I felt that my note taking acted as a visual signifier, reminding those working alongside me that I was a researcher. Again it would be best to view covert/overt not as dichotomous (being overt or not) but more as a "spectrum of activity" (Spicker 2011:119) dependent on contextual factors.

I was mindful that sustained access might leave me open to accusations of having 'gone native' in embedding myself in daily activities. However, I felt that embedding myself would only increase the strength of my findings, have been produced through a collaborative, iterative process. Hall (2018) writes how through becoming involved directly, personally and existentially with people in daily activities the researcher can increase the likelihood of accurate findings. The potential for misunderstanding and inaccurate observation increases when the researcher remains distanced physically and socially from the subject of study. Being embedded reduces the possibility of inaccurate observation because the researcher gains through subjective involvement direct access to what people think, do and feel from multiple perspectives.

This multiplicity was important when, as Jorgensen reminds us, "researcher" is almost never a natural role (Jorgensen 1989). The 'resident' role provided me with an interesting status, enabling insights that might otherwise be inaccessible to the researcher (Drury and Scott 2001, Uldam & McCurdy 2013). Over the course of my

time in the field I attended artist talks, singing lessons, scratch nights, film screenings, gallery openings and closing parties, poetry recitals, dance rehearsals and meetings. I was able to observe and ask questions as part of general conversation and participate in daily tasks. In observing and talking with people sitting in the communal areas, making tea or cleaning there was little need to mention my research unless asked specifically about it. I found these 'in-between' times, when art making was put aside for more mundane tasks, insightful. Again, the aim of the research was to demystify arts research, and move away from the intense valorisation of artistic labour as something mystical and 'other'. In becoming a resident, I wanted to explore the myriad of tiny acts that make up the everyday – cleaning, responding to emails and sharing food for example.

However, becoming a resident did not mean practicing as an artist myself, though I did take part in what could be deemed artistic activity (sitting in on a rehearsal, attending a singing lesson). For this research, I believed a fluidity of movement and role was important, and that designating myself as a visual artist (my background) would distance me from practitioners in other disciplines. This follows both Adler and Adler's (1987) and Jorgensen's (1989) instruction to take on, or perform a variety of roles during the course of research. In this way, the multiple perspectives and accounts that come from this fluidity illuminate varied aspects of lived experience. Furthermore, I have described how art making is an embodied process, requiring some form of editing and complete engagement with the work. I was concerned that in focusing on my own art making I would be drawn away from the research concern.

As Schwalbe (1996) notes, "reflecting on my reactions to their activities, in light of my own biography helped me to understand …Every insight was both a doorway and

a mirror – a way to see into their experience and a way to look back at mine" (Schwalbe 1996a:58). Although my study did not explicitly adopt the position of auto ethnography, I found both reflexive awareness and constant questioning of my own position, acknowledging any prior knowledge and values, added depth and sensitivity to my research. Through this I found myself aligned more with the 'reflexive practitioner' rather than the auto ethnographer; that is, a researcher who is "is self-aware and therefore able to engage in self-monitoring and self-regulation" (Mann et. al 2009:596). However, whilst Mann et al (2009) introduce the researcher's self as a means of controlling the research, I feel this belies an ontology that sees the researcher as able to critically disengage from both the research and themselves in order to 'keep a check' on progress. There is a need to move past the idea that the researcher only brings their 'self' into the research to facilitate relationships with participants or act as a regulator. The research process, through a continual process of insight and empathy, *forms* the researcher.

### 3.3.7 Summary

The first section of this chapter attempted to illuminate the research approach, introducing PO and an immersion in HP that I argue introduces sensitivity and embodiment to the research. In using PO, I aimed to produce research that is both embedded and embodied, grounded in the lives and processes of being and becoming a resident. This focus necessitated a long immersion in the field working with residents to explore lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt

1994). This need to work ‘with’ residents meant adopting methods that made space for the fluid, networked nature of practice. Go-alongs allowed me to follow phenomena, expanding on things I had noted during observation.

In addition to locating the research within a methodological framework, a consideration of my own positionality in relation to the research ‘laid bare’ my changing role as a form of extended reflexive exercise. I now turn to the process of analysing and interpreting my fieldwork.

## 3.4 Section Three: Data, Analysis and Interpretation

### 3.4.1 Thoughts on ‘Data’ – Collection or Generating?

Before entering in a wider discussion of the analysis and interpretation of my fieldwork, this section outlines thoughts on both the usage of ‘data’ and ‘collection’ in qualitative research and how this relates to my own ontological positioning. This is intended to clear up any lasting ambiguities and clarify my own approach.

Data analysis is often presented as a neutral, mechanical and decontextualized process applied to data in a social vacuum (Mauthner and Doucet 2003) or as a “range of techniques for sorting, organising and indexing qualitative data” (Manson 1996:7) without reflecting on the embodied, situated and subjective researcher carrying out the analysis. My fieldwork was a situated activity that located me in the world, within a set of interpretive embodied practices. However, these practices transformed the world into a series of representations: field notes, photographs or transcripts of conversations (Denzin & Lincoln 2008). Using a term like ‘collection’ belies an ideology that

suggests data is 'out there' for us to find and capture, rather than something that is co-created between researcher and participant. In this, it occludes the role of the researcher in any meaning making. As Wolcott (1994) notes, "everything has the potential to be data – but nothing *becomes* data without the researcher who takes note – and often makes note – of some things to the exclusion of others" (Wolcott 1994:4). Furthermore, collecting data suggests a linear, finite process that ends once all of the pieces are gathered. Instead, my process echoed Schmuck's (2008) "spirals and cycles" of research, a dialectic driven by what was "demanded by the 'things themselves'" (Heidegger 1977:73) rather than a rigid research design.

I follow Birks and Mills (2011) in their definitions of *collecting* data, and *generating* data. Whilst *collecting* data assumes static subjects that are researched 'on', *generatin*g data is characterised by a process of co-construction between researcher and participant. Going further, I drew from Charmaz (2006) in dividing the generated data into elicited texts (co-produced) or extant texts (constructed by others). The emphasis on both is that they are *constructed*, and do not exist out in the world for us, as researchers, to find. For this research, I used both elicited and extant texts to explore the everyday of residents within EPSB. I did not look for parity of data gathering across sites, rather sought to let each site present its own information. The following section provides further detail on the differing forms of data.

### 3.4.2 Extant Data: Artefacts from the Field

As part of this research, I collated a multitude of found materials from across East Pilgrim Street Block and Ouseburn Valley. These took various forms including printed materials advertising performances, talks and events within the block, residents notices pinned to boards, business cards and samples of work (given willingly – I never

crossed the boundary into covert thievery). I also collected mementos of personal relationships forged through the year – a Christmas card, a phone number scribbled on torn paper. This was a way of immersing myself in the space, and the activity within it, and a practical way of finding new participants or sites of research. They also served as a tactile, visual aid during analysis.

Before entering the field, I had read newspaper articles detailing the continuing efforts to regenerate East Pilgrim Street for commercial use. This dynamic narrative between artistic occupation and commercial desires was a compounding reason for choosing to look at the block. Furthermore, I was not attempting to produce research based on Grounded Theory where the researcher is encouraged to suspend or bracket what they already know of phenomena before entering the field. Reading extant texts before entering the field, as well as my prior working knowledge of the location and residents only added to my ability to produce credible, authentic accounts of life within the spaces. As Fetterman writes, researchers go into the field with an 'open mind not an empty head' (Fetterman 2010:1). Gadamer (1997) echoes this, explaining how "a topic is approached with some pre-conceptions, or projection, and this projection is then examined and revised in the face of what "the things themselves" reveal to us (Gadamer 1997:267). However, I was wary of immersing myself entirely in extant texts before the fieldwork began, wanting instead to draw from direct experience.

Not forgetting that EPSB was and is a site of artistic production, I saw both the art and materials within the space as data. Indeed, as Inglis (2005:90) contends, the art-form is a sign of cultural construction that, rather than part of some ethereal realm, is in fact part of society and therefore connected to what people do on an everyday basis. Responding to this interpretation, we can think of art forms as the material product of

the broader social, economic and cultural contexts that frame them. During my time in the field, I drew from art, architectural plans, council documents and existing photographs from archives of both the East Pilgrim Street area and Ouseburn Valley. I saw this as a way to remain engaged with the field even when I was not directly 'in' it. Additionally, these documents provided context, rooting them in a historical past and giving an indication to hoped-for future directions. Combined with the found materials, this built rich, evocative research based not only on direct experience, but also on contextual factors surrounding the sites.

### 3.4.3 Elicited Data: Fieldnotes and Photographs

PO is not just about gaining access and observing, being physically present in the space, but also being able to re-create it on the page (Emerson et. al 2001). My note taking was broad, rich and descriptive but, in being influenced by HP, there was no initial analysis. Instead, I wanted to produce evocative and meticulous written accounts of what I had seen, heard, felt, and even smelt in the spaces.

Taken from Jorgensen (1989), I produced a series of First Encounter Questions that guided each entry into the field. They included:

What are the main features of the physical landscape?

What kind of space or building is it?

How typical is it?

Is it somehow unusual?

What kinds of things are in this space or building?

How is the space organised?

How many people are there?

How do they look? How are they attired?

What are their ages/genders/ethnicity?

Can you see signs of social status or rank?

How are people in the space arranged/organised?

Can you discern connections or relationships?

(Jorgensen 1989:82)

These questions offered an almost systematic way of ordering the often overwhelming experience of entering a new physical site. Providing a way to map the physical contours of the space, Jorgensen's (1989) questions also helped guide my observation of the block's residents. Wanting to create a more embodied account, I formulated my own additional questions that I attempted to answer at the beginning of every entry into the field.

What do you see?

What do you smell?

What do you hear?

What do you feel?

(Fieldnotes 01112015)

I returned to Davidson and Milligan's emotio-spatial hermeneutic (2004), recognising that emotions are understandable - 'sensible' - only in the context of particular places. Emotions are, to a certain extent, socially constructed. We think of Sara Ahmed's (2014) conceptualisation of the way emotions are made sensible in the moment, that

they ‘stick; to objects in a social context. Emotions are by extension, social emotions; they are cultural practices not psychological states.

Likewise, place must be *felt* to make sense. I wanted to explore what it *felt* like to live and work in EPSB. The aim was to produce a more embodied, relational account, attempting to capture the ephemeral, and the fleeting. As Geertz writes, in producing notes in close proximity to the field, although not always contemporaneously, the researcher “turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account which exists in its inscription and can be reconstituted” (Geertz 1994:223). My field notes were an attempt to turn the transient into something lasting. The irony of this attempt was not overlooked; considering the scheduled demolition of East Pilgrim Street the notes will outlast the physical site, memorialising it in written form.

My notes took three distinct forms; long passages in the form of a diary written contemporaneously with the events they described, hastily sketched notes and phrases to aid recollection, and finally reflective notes often written alone. The long notes formed a recital of events in chronological order. This form of written narration was based on the assumption expounded by Rosenthal that, “the narration of an experience comes closest to the experience itself.” (Rosenthal 1993:89). Practically, this meant the longer notes were written after circumstances where it would not have been appropriate to make notes as I went along for fear of alienating other residents. In reality, this meant notes written in toilet cubicles, brief lift journeys or furtive tea breaks. The reflective notes were due to a desire to continually reflect on and conceptualise my experiences, but not analyse in depth. Instead, I positioned my research as a continual process involving “spirals and cycles of research, collecting

data, analysis, reflecting, planning, acting, and collecting data again (Schmuck 2008:1). In these three configurations, they formed a bricolage of day-to-day experiences within the spaces.

Drawings reflected the aesthetic nuances of architecture that could not appropriately be summed up in the field notes. Additionally, photographs of the physical site also acted as a snapshot of a temporal moment and as a practical tool to aid recall. The images became a form of visual field notes, documenting daily activity and larger shifts over my year in the field. I found taking photographs to be a less intrusive way to gather data than notetaking. However, I was mindful that using photography placed particular emphasis on a specific moment in time, rather than placing events within a wider context. Additionally, that either I or the other residents might 'curate' the photo by posing or framing it to be more aesthetically pleasing. Therefore, I used the images as a supplement to, rather than the base of my analysis. In combination, this broad approach to data gathering aimed to make "explicit the structure of the lived experience" from the viewpoint of those that live the experience (Van Manen 1990:77). Encompassing both extant and elicited data, artefacts, field notes and photographs, I created a picture of EPSB that is both in-depth and rich in detail.

### 3.4.4 Transcription and Analysis – Transforming data

Whilst I have presented this section in a linear fashion, leading from transcription through to analysis and interpretation, in reality, this was anything but. My process in dealing with the vast amount of raw data I had accumulated over my fieldwork, as with the data gathering itself, reflected Schmuck's (2008) "spirals and cycles" of research, sifting, sorting, reflecting, planning and writing all concurrently. I

understand that this initial terror is something most first time ethnographers, unaccustomed to the sheer amount of data to be attended to, experience.

My fieldwork ended in October 2016, one year after I had first begun my primary research. After so long in the field, the data I had gathered resembled a battlefield. Two spiralled notepads; their hard frames useful for notetaking when I could not find a surface to lean on, now scored with thumbprints, notes and torn edges. I also had gathered a suitcase full of artefacts, both fragmentary and ambiguous in form and content. This ambiguity felt *dangerous* – as Lederman warns "observations are noted or written down in order to aid memory, but reading field notes can challenge memory" (Lederman 1990:73). Whilst the field notes validated the fact I had "been there", in the field, and through being there could now report on what I had experienced, the danger lay in having misremembered key details, or worse, not having enough material to draw from. A further challenge lay in the disconnect between 'there' and 'here', the field and the office – how to bridge this divide and 'stitch' the materials into one conclusive whole when they were, as Clarke writes "complicated, impure, messy, full of different kinds of "stuff" that the researcher must somehow handle – rather like life itself" (Clarke 2005:166).

At the outset, I found it hard to separate myself from 'being there', in the midst of the field, actively collecting data. This manifested itself in an inability, at first, to being the process of analysis. However, whilst I wanted to begin to make some sort of order out of this chaos, Lefebvre (1991b) warns of the dominance of imposing the norm of fetishized abstraction that "detaches the pure form from its impure content — from lived time, everyday time, and from bodies with their opacity and solidity, their warmth," (Lefebvre, 1991b:97). With this in mind, I was wary of starting to break

down my experiences too early in the research. I was aware that any attempts to transform "unruly experience into an authoritative written account" (Clifford 1983:25) too early may have meant the 'thinning out' the complexity and depth that leads to the "thick description" (Geertz 1975) of phenomena. Furthermore, whilst analysing my materials would mean breaking them down, I wanted to see the research emerging as "a meaningful emotional whole, as if at a glance, all at once" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:6). This would, hopefully, help with direction and ensure that I was treating the data as something that could enunciate its own story, rather than dictating direction.

Based on the assumption expounded by Rosenthal that, "the narration of an experience comes closest to the experience itself." (Rosenthal 1993:89) I began the process by transcribing the recorded conversations from the field. Each interview file was labelled with the initials of the participant, the date and the location (e.g. AB_132016_BH). In the empirical chapters, all quotes from these interviews are listed similarly, with the initials and the date of the conversation. Greater detail on individual participants – without revealing too much of their identities – is outlined in Appendix 2. Wanting to remain immersed in my data, I transcribed all of the recorded conversations myself. The Dictaphone technology I used to record gave me control over playback, allowing simultaneous transcription. I found that, in doing the transcription myself, I could be more attentive to the subtle nuances of speech and intonation, and include these in the written text. I made sure, when transcribing, to note down coughs, stutters or pauses feeling that these in-between times were moments of added insight and meaning. These transcripts also contained notes that attempted to capture the *feeling* of the conversation; the location, time of day, clothing, and weather for example added extra detail.

I remained attentive to the non-verbal sounds that painted an aural picture of the space. Hammering sounds in the background reminded me of the dynamism of the space that they were always under construction. In this way, the focus became just as much about the peripheries – background traffic, the sound of steps – that situated the speaker and became as vital as the recorded conversation itself.

Throughout the analysis I was reluctant to use computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) through a belief that they encourage a quantitative, mechanical analysis of qualitative data. Following Roberts and Wilson (2002), I maintain that the aim in qualitative analysis is the identification and interpretation of various shades of meaning that the data produces. Computers, established on a digital, quantitative orientation to the world, are limited in how far they can aid this type of interpretation (Roberts and Wilson, 2002). They write,

> "it is not realistic, nor true to the purpose of qualitative research, to expect a social phenomenon, described in language by the participants themselves, to be broken up, quantified and analysed in a meaningful way by a tool based on a positivistic orientation to the social and natural worlds. Of course, quantifying, categorising, and breaking up the data is possible and is a legitimate part of the analysis process at least insofar as some general high level sorting is concerned. The issue is more the extent to which the researcher is going to lose or distort the meaning that the social phenomenon had by attempting the interpretative process in the same way"
>
> (Roberts and Wilson 2002:7)

Following Lefebvre's call to embody research with flesh and blood (Lefebvre 1991b) I would add that using software distances the researcher from the data. This distance 'distorts', encourages homogeneity in methods, and stifles creative responses (Richards & Richards 1998). In addition, analysing the data by hand was a means of rendering the researcher visible. I felt that using computer-aided technology reinforced the idea of an absent or neutral researcher "the use of technology confers an air of

scientific objectivity onto what remains a fundamentally subjective, interpretive process" (Mauthner and Doucet 1998:122). My main concern was to remain 'embedded' in the data, however 'unruly' the experience. Even so, I was mindful of Wolcott's guiding question, "Am I attending to what *is* going on, as I am attending to what I *think* is going on?" (Wolcott 1994:21) This question reminds us again, not to move too quickly towards abstract analysis, rather treat the data as something that can enunciate its own story (Wolcott 1994).

Following transcription, I collated, sifted and scrutinized all the disparate materials I had gathered. My field notes, in part, already formed a large part of the descriptive stage. Additionally, I began to make notes around the transcriptions of conversations, adding contextual notes. It was at this stage I found my materials too nebulous to draw concrete conclusions. As Lederman warns,

> "Having notes – all neatly typed and bound, all stored safe and sound – is one thing...but using notes is quite another: that activity shows fieldnotes to be not a fixed repository of data from the field but a reinterpretable and contradictory patchwork of perspectives"
>
> (Lederman 1990:93)

The question became how to stitch this complex 'patchwork' together, whilst remaining sensitive to the multiple and often contradictory messages the data presented. Once together, my first step was a close reading of all the material to aid recollection but also to start pulling out embedded patterns and not to miss infrequent but significant moments of insight. In this way, the analysis and interpretation occurred concurrently. It was a dialectical process, involving going 'to' and 'from' the text, expanding both my interpretation and my understanding of events. A second, full

close reading allowed me to be less empirically cautious, introducing themes drawn from my interpretation of events, and their relation to the questions raised from the literature review. There was no measurable standard for the themes, rather their importance arose from my interpretation of how much emphasis residents placed on what they discussing, combined with my own exploration of the research questions. Again, I would re-iterate the reflexive nature of this process. I bought my own 'self' into the research including prejudices, interests and prior knowledge. Whilst interpretation is done through the synthesis of prior knowledge and immersion in the literature, it is also, "through the memory of the field experience, unwritten yet inscribed in the fieldworker's being" (Okely 1994:30). This idea of experience being 'inscribed' was significant. I found that insights often emerged subconsciously on long walks, in the shower and in other unexpected moments. This mirrors Okely (1994) who writes that in her own research, "ideas and theories, having fermented in the subconscious, emerged by free association from specific experience" (Okely 1994:31). In this way the interpretation process was 'embodied'; that is, physical activity helped relive and rework material inscribed from having 'been there', in the field.

This follows Barnacle's (2001) observation, that "the hermeneutic conviction is however that coding, of itself, does not necessarily lead to understanding or insight; rather, the revelatory power of research is animated by the researcher's power of "observation, reflection and judgement" (Barnacle 2001:22). Multiple close readings formed an ever-expanding circle of analysis and interpretation (Gadamer 1997). I found I could increase the possibility of discovering relationships, connections and meanings of which I had not previously been aware. From the transcribed conversations and descriptive field notes, I developed a visual map with key words,

themes and potential paragraph headings to allow my writing to develop along with the analysis. Again, this was a dialectical process involving multiple close readings alongside writing. I have detailed the visual map below:

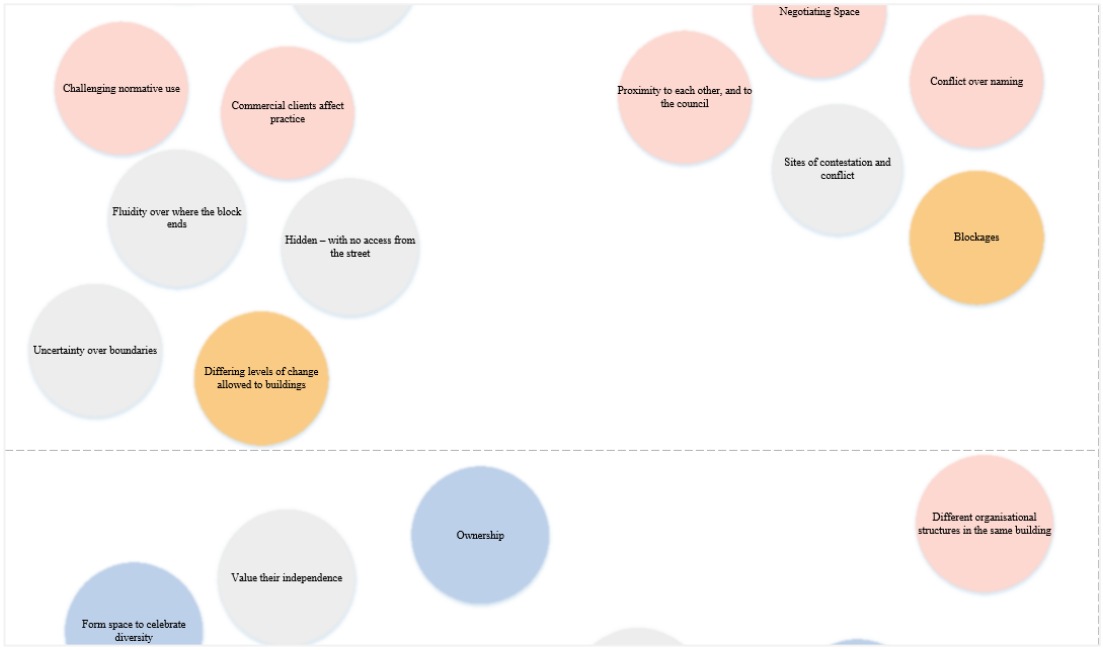


*Figure 5: First version of the thematic map*

This visual map was a means to capture the data as "a meaningful emotional whole, as if at a glance, all at once" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:6). It was a creative act, allowing me to 'think through' the data, allowing various shades of meaning to bubble to the surface. Whilst technology such as Nvivo would have made this process cleaner I would argue computers, founded as they are on a digital and quantitative view of the world, are limited in how far they can help with such interpretive work. As Okely (1994) writes, "No computer can stand in for the ethnographer's discovery of emergent themes as fieldwork progresses, nor the final thinking and analysis. No computer can think through the fieldwork" (Okely 1994:25).

There were several iterations of the visual map as the analysis and interpretation developed.


*Figure 6: Revised thematic map*

I began "seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories" in the emerging theory, and stories (Clarke 2005:96). Themes emerged within and across the data, expanding until they became saturated. I would compare this process to the 'puzzle making' described by LeCompte & Preissle (1993). They describe how,

> "The edge pieces are located first and assembled to provide a frame of reference. Then attention is devoted to those more striking aspects of the puzzle picture that can be identified readily from the mass of pieces and assembled separately. Next (after sneaking a look at the puzzle picture on the box for hints,) the puzzle worker places the assembled parts in their general position within the frame, and finally locates and adds the connecting pieces until no holes remain"
>
> (LeCompte & Preissle 1993:237).

I would expand on this metaphor, comparing the process more closely to a quilt-maker. Whilst a person completing a puzzle might abandon the pursuit at the sign of a missing piece, my aim was to stich these disparate materials together to form one coherent whole.

I did not let the confines of strict lines of enquiry limit what emerged during analysis. Events that held meaning were not immediately discounted because they did not 'fit' with my original aims. Indeed, my original aims at the outset were a dramatic departure from what I found at the scoping stage. Rather, my initial research aims formed the bridge between the gaps in the literature and the themes that emerged during data gathering, analysis and interpretation. This meant analysis was a distinctly iterative process, taking into account both my findings and my original research aims in order to answer the *right* questions, not the questions that appeared right at the start of the research.

During analysis I highlighted three main themes I wanted to draw out further. The three empirical chapters are each formed around these three themes. Firstly I explored the process of spatial creation within interstitial space; how residents of EPSB imagine, transform and negotiate space. Secondly, the forms of artistic practice EPSB engendered and the effects on this practice of an increasingly precarious lifeworld. Finally, I wanted to expand the research beyond the footprint of EPSB to explore how these interstitial spaces fit within popular narratives of culture-led regeneration and the Creative City.

### 3.4.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological response to the aims of the research. Evolving from a belief that terms like 'collection' reveal an ideology that suggests data is 'out there' for us to find and capture, I instead formed my fieldwork around a process of in-depth participation that viewed data as something that is co-created between researcher and participant. Through an iterative process of fieldwork, and go-

alongs with residents in combination with a small collection of found materials, I was able to form a detailed picture of everyday life within EPSB. The process of analysing this data was slow and messy, reflecting Schmuck's (2008) "spirals and cycles" of research. However, following Lefebvre's call to embody research with flesh and blood (Lefebvre 1991b), any distance would have left the data open to distortion. This slow process allowed me to remain attentive, and empathic to the story I was trying to tell. The culmination of this process is a body of empirical work rich in detail and robust - formed out of direct involvement with the complex experiences, histories and beliefs that form the artist's lifeworld within the interstitial space of EPSB.

# Chapter Four

## 4. Introduction to the empirical chapters

The following is the first chapter to present empirical material gathered and analysed through an iterative process of fieldwork within EPSB. Responding to the need for research that is informed by in-depth observation of the vernacular (Evans 2009, ACE 2014, Walmsley 2016) this research aims to produce a nuanced account of life within EPSB, both the moments of great drama alongside the mundane and the humdrum, in an attempt to produce new insight into the relationship between artists and urban space.

The literature review in Chapter 2 acted as a form of scoping exercise, grounding the research in current debate and discourse. From this review, I highlighted three main themes I wanted to expand upon. Firstly, the process of spatial creation within interstitial space: how residents of EPSB imagine, transform and negotiate space. Secondly, the forms of artistic practice EPSB engendered and the effects on this practice of an increasingly precarious lifeworld. Finally, I wanted to expand the research beyond the built environment of EPSB to explore how these interstitial spaces fit within popular narratives of culture-led regeneration and the Creative City.

The three empirical chapters are each formed around these three themes. However, I did not let the confines of strict lines of enquiry limit what emerged during analysis. Events that held meaning were not immediately discounted because they did not ‘fit’

with my original aims. Rather, I wanted to answer the *right* questions, not the questions that appeared right at the start of the research.

Each chapter is formed of descriptions from my data in combination with an in-depth discussion, drawing from both the research literature and theoretical background. I felt that separating out the results, interpretation and discussion into separate chapters goes against the epistemological core of my research. Both the research and researcher, the writing process and the writing product are deeply intertwined (Richardson and St Pierre 2008). In addition, by combining my empirical work with extant literature, I present a more authentic development of my research within the wider body of knowledge. This was a distinctly iterative process, involving going to and from theory to data and back again, drawing out complex threads of meaning that was always situated - that is, framed by both prior research, and the aims and objectives of this thesis.

The first chapter to present empirical work explores the ways in which residents of EPSB imagine, transform and negotiate space. This early focus on imaginaries was crucial due to the neglect of spatial creation within current urban literature. The second chapter focuses on artistic practice within EPSB. Through this, it explores how the fluid precarious nature of interstitial space shapes the practice within it. The final chapter of empirical work attempts to locate my research experience within wider narratives of culture-led regeneration and the Creative City.

Whilst others (Bain & McLean 2013) have produced nuanced accounts of artist's spaces, I wanted to add to this by producing an account of a space in 'becoming'.

EPSB was at a crucial juncture in regards to future development. Additionally, the block has grown autonomously, is self- determined rather than a response to cultural policy or a public funding strategy. Populated by artists in empty offices left by the 2008/2009 recession, now threatened with certain eviction and demolition. Nevertheless, EPSB demonstrated a perpetually evolving character that was dynamic and shifting, from agricultural to industrial and now creative uses. Being present in spaces scheduled for demolition in the near future offered unique insight and access into a short-lived disruption of Newcastle's urban fabric. Through embodying Lefebvre's triad with flesh and blood (Lefebvre 1991b) – to tell stories of the everyday from the perspective of those who live it - I wanted to explore how landscapes are constructed and lived and dig through the layers of meaning constructed through everyday life. I explore stories of wants and desires, aspirations and decisions to see how the interstitial emerges from within existent space.

EPSB sits uneasily within current conceptions of the Creative City highlighted in Chapter 2. Indeed, there seems to be an element of reverse engineering to make spaces fit with more common conceptions such as 'clusters' 'hubs' or other crossovers from the language of economic development. Whilst the aim was not to explicitly re-define the phenomena, I remain frustrated by the lack of attentiveness in describing artist-led spaces. My empirical chapters aim to redress this imbalance, providing a description and analysis of artist-led spaces developed through exploration with the artists themselves.

Like others (Wolcott 1985; Schwalbe 1996; Bain & McLean 2013), each chapter of empirical work is formed around extended excerpts from field notes, conversations and photography as a form of descriptive scene setting. Whilst the field notes and

conversations are edited around particular themes that emerged during analysis, the photographs remain unedited. This means that, in some instances, the images are blurred, or dark. However, I felt it was important to include them as a way of recreating 'being there' in order to 'be here' and share my research experiences. I feel this is of particular importance now that EPSB has been demolished - becoming a form of memento mori. Additionally, I feel it is important to acknowledge the reader's role in any meaning making. Therefore, by 'scene-setting' in this way my aim is to bring the reader into the moment, to remain attentive to the embodied experience of fieldwork. I want to bring attention to the particular emotions, and sensations of 'being' within EPSB.

## 4.1 Imagining, Transforming, Negotiating Space

This first chapter explores notions of spatial creation as outlined in Lefebvre's Triad (1991b). I have used his ideas to frame the ways in which the residents of EPSB make and remake urban space. In this, the chapter explores how imagination is a vital element in spatial creation, creating mental spaces that mirror the material. An unseen, informal network of commercial enterprises providing financial and emotional support supports these processes. I argue throughout the chapter that artists form space based on their desires, but constrained by a complex series of policy and planning. Rather than emerge out of urban 'gaps', as Le Strat contends, interstitial space is planned to some extent. These findings are drawn from the experiences of artists within EPSB. Whilst I understand that EPSB does not exist in isolation – developments within are framed by wider socio-economic and environmental shifts – I wanted to explore the lived experience of artists from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt 1994).

The aim is to develop a nuanced, in-depth understanding of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it

### 4.1.1 Imagining Space

I want to open the first chapter of empirical work with an exploration of the way residents imagine space. This was particularly important as projects, planned in quick meetings, or sketched out in corridors, in some instances never came to fruition. 'Becoming' in these instances involves, "stutters and cuts, misfires and stoppages, unintended outcomes, unprecedented transferences and jagged edges" (Thrift & Dewsbury 2000:418).

I move on to a consideration of how residents 'transform' spaces; incrementally moulding old offices into spaces of artistic production. Finally, the chapter concludes with an in-depth look at the ways in which the space is constantly negotiated. Residents must continually evolve in line with both internal and external shifts in funding, management and practice.

### 4.1.2 Imagining 'ideal' space

To begin this chapter I turn to the importance of imagination in spatial creation. As outlined in the previous chapter, 'becoming' is never static and requires interpretation, not only of ourselves but also of inherent possibilities in the world (Heidegger 1927, 1962). Imagination is a crucial tool in this process of becoming, taking us out of the midst of the now to explore the possible future, re-orienting the reader to the *process* of spatial creation, rather than just the *product*. As Lefebvre contends, space is both a mental and a material construct (Lefebvre in Elden 2004:190). This 'mental' space was important when the material space never came to fruition. Within the midst of

these possibilities lies an ideal, the ideal space for artistic production according to the residents of EPSB.

Commercial Union House (CUH) runs a monthly scratch night (an event designed to allow artists to 'test' their new work on a live audience) for theatre makers on the sixth floor. It was here I sat in on a frank conversation about the wants and desires of residents within EPSB.

> PAR 5: "Blue sky thinking, if you could have a space, a variety of spaces…I'd like Northern Stage though I think that can feel very closed. So maybe…a flexible space that can be used in a variety of ways.
>
> PAR1: And maybe something that's a bit less defined. It's great to have independent spaces…artist led spaces are so much more exciting. Things like Space Six, Alphabetti…that's where the excitement is…not the monolith.
>
> PAR4: Do you think that's for creating work as well as performing it? Do you think maybe these spaces give you something about the creation process…I don't know? You know, because that's exciting, you know I like working in this community hall in this little village because it's got something about it but it's not always practical. And its…yeah…it has something about it . . .
>
> PAR3: I think they're more open minded as opposed to…
>
> PAR2: Institutionalised…"
>
> (G_210116_CUH)

This conversation raises three points; firstly, the desire for space to be flexible and fluid. A space that can be used in a variety of ways; opening up practice to the potential of cross-fertilisation and collaboration. Informality in this instance represents opportunity – the ability to find and form space based on their desires and create work that is exciting, thrilling.

I also sensed a need to retain some level of control over the process of spatial creation. Imagination was positioned as a useful tool in reaction to a series of evictions,

demolitions and take overs. ‘Artist-led’, ‘independent’ are used as synonyms for space that is, for them, the opposite of what is formally commissioned, licensed and funded. Furthermore, they expressed a reticence to engage in, or be beholden to traditional art market systems. DB expressed how,

> “The Ouseburn has 250 studios now. The Biscuit Factory plans to build 70 more there. This place is more for ‘non-commercial’ artists.”
>
> (DB_181115_CUH)

The desire to remain independent meant less attention focused on what they referred to as ‘practicalities’. A community hall, whilst remote, lacking heating and equipment presented a more ‘exciting’ opportunity than a ‘closed’ space such as Northern Stage. I take ‘closed’ here to mean subject to profit seeking motives and management practices that shape performances towards traditional forms of theatre and dance that guarantee a return on investment. A community hall is a chance to circumvent these limitations on artistic practice, again a space to experiment. A perfect example of, as de Certeau notes, the centrality of human agency and the possibility of resistance to the dictates of bureaucratic reason within the ordinary, intimate, and familiar” (Gardiner, 2000:158).

Finally, I found this conversation fascinating for the way these artists positioned themselves against the ‘monolith’. By framing Northern Stage or Dance City as ‘commercial’ or as ‘institutions’, they themselves became ‘non-commercial’, ‘independent’ or, using the terminology of this thesis - ‘interstitial’. Again, this positioning was not overt; there were no battle lines drawn. However, as Taussig (1991) notes, this separation was formed of “an embodied and somewhat automatic ‘knowledge’ that functions like a peripheral vision” (Taussig 1991:141). This

conversation was the first of many where residents of the block spoke of this embodied knowledge, and way of framing their own practice. Indeed, it is a theme that is repeated throughout my empirical chapters; this positioning through language at this early stage in the development of EPSB would have greater implications for both residents, their practice and their spaces.

### 4.1.3 Intangible Qualities

The idea of an embodied knowledge that is shared amongst artists from diverse backgrounds with differing practices is fascinating. Furthermore, the notion that a space must have 'something about it' in order to be ideal. By bringing in the idea of 'intangibles' and the feeling of a space draws from Highmore's assertion that research be embedded, with "a stress on feelings and experience" (Highmore 2002:5) I want to draw attention to, in this instance, how the 'feel' of the space was more important than the actual built environment. As the conversation continued:

> PAR1: I think it's best to talk about qualities. I think for me it's more about how it feels to sit and watch something than it does to…like, so for example Alphabetti I feel comfortable, like, held in the space. It feels like, as an audience member and I'm not sitting on, like, these kind of regimented seats. It's got something...
>
> PAR5: Do you think it's a homely quality?
>
> PAR1: It's a homely quality…it's a familiar feeling, even though I've only been there a couple of times. Like, I know the space. So it doesn't feel too formal. Ummm, it's not too formal but it's really well done. It's not just botched together, it's like….you feel at home in the space."
>
> (G_210116_SS)

Hard seats represent a formal environment creating a certain rigidity in both artistic practice and the feeling of being within a space. This rigidity was embodied; sitting on hard seats took her out of the moment, leaving her unable to be lost in the moment

- the body contorted to fit rigid seats. Spatial characteristics are, for these residents, indicative of a wider ethos. Partly because these characteristics could be moulded – they could be changed. In response to this perceived lack of comfort, G had a role in developing somewhere 'homely' This conversation was particularly important as the space they discussed never materialised. These spatial imaginings are a powerful tool in precarious circumstances.

### 4.1.4 Adaptation through imagination

The preceding section has outlined how residents of EPSB used imagination as tool to create a mental 'ideal' space. The summation of their previous experiences, these spaces were flexible, exciting and sometimes impractical, but also engendered a familiarity, and a sense of comfort they found lacking in the larger, funded institutions.

The following idea to address is, why the need to imagine space in the first instance? If we take Ingold's (2000) proposal, that, from a 'dwelling perspective', "the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, only arise within the current of their life activities" (Ingold 2000:154) these spatial imaginaries are drawn from lived experience. My fieldwork revealed two key factors, or 'life activities' that perpetuated the need to imagine space. Both concerned notions of *access* – to facilities, networks and space to work in a city lacking independent structures.

Firstly, imagination formed an important tool to counteract the loss of access to facilities after university. Residents revealed how, for them, university had been a time of experimentation and freedom. Graduating meant leaving the collaborative, warm and central comfort of large heated studios, access to a wide range of materials and ready access to peer and mentor support.

In imagining space, they recreated this freedom of practice. CG reflected on this, commenting how:

> "I guess it goes back to what we really missed from university, and that environment within the studios was that kind of ummm peer group around you, that support network"

(CG_25022016_NH)

For CG, leaving university was not just about loss of the close peer support, but about the physical space and the ready supply of available materials. As a student, her practice was supported by ready access to materials and space. This support network acted both in physical and often, financial terms. As a student, it was "ok to be poor", as there was always the eventuality of another loan payment. Her peer group had common aims: a group that did not place any onus on property ownership because, as during university, it was ok to be poor as long as you produced good art. After graduation and as she got older, social pressure mounted. Now peers outside of the arts had new cars and mortgages. Imagination proved a useful tool to protect against mounting social pressure.

Erel (2010) describes how a 'rucksack' approach to cultural capital views migrants as bringing with them a package of cultural resources that they 'unpack' in the new location. According to this logic, upon graduation CG should have been able to unpack her rucksack filled with the physical, corporeal skills to practice as an artist, and the cultural capital to be able to ground her work. However, I would argue that this 'rucksack' is never useful in isolation. Without actual financial capital the tools and physical materials of art making- the canvas and paint, the brushes – were often out of reach. The rucksack is reliant on the environment in which you unpack it. Artists

require an environment of support that goes beyond the physical space but also about the metaphorical space to create, to experiment, without pressure.

Secondly, low cost space, that was mouldable allowed many to move their practice from a hobby, to a professional practice. The ability to find some form of separation between their home and work selves was important, as ME outlined;

> ME: What I also don't understand is that if you are working at home is how you grow? How do you grow if you can't find the space you're looking for? I mean, I know a lot of people who work from their spare room, I mean they've got a back bedroom or whatever and would like to expand. How many people are being held back? I think there's a lack of low cost space.
>
> (ME_12012016_NH)

The lack of access to low cost studio space denied certain practitioners the legitimisation of their own space. For ME, this meant he was unable to grow his business due to a lack of storage. Indeed, a great misunderstanding of artistic practice on my behalf was the importance of storage space.

Lastly, the need to imagine was driven by access to space that was dependent, isolating, dangerous and fluid. Prior to EPSB, residents explained how, to practice as an artist meant coalescing in temporary spaces across the city. As PN explained,

> "Before, I had other studios across Newcastle, I was in the West End for about 3 or 4 years above a carpet shop on Elswick Road… it was a with a few other people, a few friends of mine who knew the owners of the building…we hoped to expand, we had half the floor and we were hoping to expand it to the other half which was just being used for storage by the family"
>
> (PN_110116_CUH)

This conversation was fascinating for its vivid imagery, and for the way it portrayed artistic practice - of artists hiding away in attics, furtively producing work surrounded by carpet samples and storage boxes. In this we see a reflection of the "practical

interventions in the derelict or disregarded spaces; temporary designs and colloquial uses that remake space in provisional or rigged up ways" described by Tonkiss (2013:312). PN produced work 'interstitially' – that is operating in the cracks between formal planning and local possibilities (Hodkinson 2012).

He continued:

> "So, I, so then, so then I moved to a sort of, another sort of space. These were all directly through private landlords who just had spare spaces on Elswick Road. I occupied kind of an upstairs space"
>
> (PN_110116_CUH)

For PN, finding a place to work was a form of spatial Tetris, with artists occupying the gaps between 'traditional' businesses, slotted in with little agency to choose which space and for how long. This was because ownership remained in the hands of private property owners. Through this, the power to *choose* and to exhibit some form of agency over where he practiced was taken away when access in this instance was based on the whim of private property owners. AP repeated this during our conversation. After graduating from a BA in Theatre, he struggled to find a place in Newcastle city centre to continue producing new work. He described how,

> "well there isn't really anywhere for us. And there's a pool of artists that at the time were all making work and didn't have anywhere to put it on so we kinda got pub rooms. They were good but they weren't that accommodating. So, we went into there and got given the upstairs space, to program it. We were given it for free. The, uuurrr, old owner gave us 600 quid for. I think it was 600 or 800 to basically do it up. So, we put in a nice new stage floor. Cleaned it all…put in stage lights. I mean it was horrible. He gave us, he found some chairs. It was literally like, beg steal and borrow. Then the pub got sold…"
>
> (AP_200116_AT)

For AP, being in the city centre was important to continue taking advantage of the networks he had developed during his studies. Additionally, a city centre location was

seen as a way to legitimise his practice, an opportunity to operate in the same space (both physically and perceptually) as the larger, funded institutions such as Northern Stage or Live Theatre. Moving between locations above pubs and shops re-iterated his belief that, in Newcastle, that "there isn't really anywhere for us" – that he did not belong. This idea of belonging is crucial and explored in further detail in the proceeding chapter.

These spaces were temporary, often dangerous, and (unsurprisingly) ill equipped for artistic production. As AP described, moving in often meant clearing out before any work could be done. Again, access was entirely dependent, but also isolating: creating barriers between the artists in Ouseburn who could afford studio space and those who moved about the city, searching for permanence. It was temporary: with leases revoked (in the rare instances formal leases were ever signed) as soon as the landlords needed their storage rooms back. In addition, it was often dangerous. During my fieldwork stories of small electrical fires, uneven floors and black mould were shared with relish. However, apart from the trade in wild stories, these spaces also highlight the informal, often unseen network of shopkeepers supporting artistic practice in the city. Artists are not the only ones involved in artistic production, rather a network of patrons in (often) surprising places.

This fluidity meant the inability to plan for anything other than the short term. Empty shops, basements, lofts and (on one occasion) alleyways became spaces for temporary artistic interventions. This fluidity also meant a feeling of powerlessness. AP described how he renovated the space for the private property owner, but they were moved on regardless. After evicting AP and his theatre company from the space above

the pub, the property owner tore out the newly installed theatre equipment. Their experiment as an arts venue remained just that, an experiment.

I have used the word 'stories' several times in the previous section. Recollection, like imagination, is not a concrete substance; it shifts and bends depending on space and time. This research documents spatial creation as it is *perceived* – aiming to produce an account of life from the perspective of those who live it. Within this, I appreciate that these tales of hardship are under threat from accusations of melodrama. Of artists reinforcing their plight for sympathy. I also recognise that other professionals are subject to the same isolating, dangerous and informal practices that affect artists. However, I felt this was important to highlight as an indicator of why imagination is vital as a tool in spatial production. Imagination forms a crucial part of spatial creation, pointing to the possibility of spaces that are not simply passive, but aim to overcome these precarious practices. As Lefebvre (1991b) Lynch (1968 [1995]) and Jacobs (1961) expound, imagination re-positions the city as a site for experimentation. Imagination is a tool for making utopianism less abstract, providing a space to explore how we might "be" or "live" within urban space - a "what if" rather than a "this is what".

### 4.1.5 Finding space

The next point to address is; what made these imaginary spaces crystallise and take root? How do we move from imagination to actuality, from the theoretical to the material when finding space involves navigating national policy, and funding initiatives? Whilst I realise the implications of the initiatives are on a national scale I

want to focus on personal narratives of finding and forming space. The aim is to give a rich account of artists' experiences of place through being and becoming a resident in EPSB, placing their lived experience at its core. Lived experience in this instance revealed varying responses to the re-invention of city centre space.

Moreover, the re-invention of city centre space revealed a great deal about urban policy in Newcastle upon Tyne. As Tonkiss (2013) contends, a permissive model of urban planning and policy maintains a certain tolerance for temporary structures, physical changes and informal economies. However, this tolerance moved to encouragement, evidenced by Newcastle City Council's support in finding spaces for recent graduate artists. The catalyst in this instance was a new initiative designed to revitalise the high street. As AB explained:

> "AB: For me I've come here from having the empty shop scheme, so taking Hazel Blears's money when labour were in and turning empty shops into little galleries.
>
> INT: Was that the same money that W and W got?
>
> AB: Exactly the same, yeah. Umm so that was Moving Gallery and that was 2009 and that led into Commercial Union House, doing a floor there and that then led into us all to meeting over there, for different reasons and then saying, ah well let's set up a building of our own.
>
> INT: So how did you guys get into this building then?
>
> AB: We, set up a CIC [Community Interest Company].
>
> DG: We decided we wanted a building so we just started walking around the city. Looking at empty properties, walking around.
>
> AB: We tried to get one down there, beyond Cuthbert House but …
>
> AB: [Cuthbert House had] the same landlord as well so this building was fairly easy, they just wanted to get their building sorted out"
>
> (ABDG_270416_BH).

Whilst this conversation creates a romanticised view of property selection, encouraging the idea that artists have the ability to find and form space detached from any external processes, I think it is important for the way in which it frames spatial creation. It outlines the pragmatics of finding and securing a space in a city lacking in independent structures.

The most important concept here is the notion of choice. The literature review outlined three rationales why artists relocated. They wanted to exercise some form of control over their location choices - 'we decided' that 'we wanted' a space. Rather than the council allocating empty buildings on a first come first served basis, this was the first instance I had heard of artists actively *choosing* a space. Indeed, this choice separated EPSB from other artistic interventions in the city.

The translation from imagined to real space involved "deformation, reformation, performation and transformation which involves gaps and gasps, stutters and cuts, misfires and stoppages, unintended outcomes, unprecedented transferences and jagged edges" (Thrift & Dewsbury 2000:418). There was no definition or clarity to what the spaces would become. What began as coincidence hardened into tradition. CG reflected on how they had started in Norham House. As part of a central government scheme to re-animate the high street, and regenerate city centre facilities, Newcastle Centre was allocated £50,000 to distribute as they saw fit. As CG explained:

> "So, it was quite a small pot but it was, it was to be used to reanimate the high street, regenerate the high street, get people like back into the city centre, using the facilities here. Spending money. And it was aimed at cultural projects so the city council decided to, I think they could use it however they wanted so some council decided to spend it all on, you know, putting flowers around [laughs]."
>
> (CG_25022016_NH)

Rather than "putting flowers around" Newcastle City Council split the fund into small £5,000 grants available by application to individual artists, or small creative organisations. What is fascinating is that one small fund would be the catalyst to start so many creative businesses. She continues:

> "we applied and were successful. So, their initial project was to umm, find an empty shop unit, get a group of artists working in there so have it as a working studio base and have that sort of process of creating work quite visible and quite public so people could come in and chat to the artists. And then at the end of that three-month period there would be an exhibition, and that would be the end of it."

(CG_25022016_NH)

Being 'seen' was an important part of this. They planned for the building to be a showcase for work, a source of funding or for fostering collaborations. Having a studio that was visible and had access from the street was a way to demystify artmaking. Additionally, their intervention was pragmatic, responsive to a perceived 'gap' in the availability of studio space for artists that was low cost and central and the availability of empty shops on struggling high streets. CG continued:

> "then the council recruited JP to help as an in-between for these artists and organisations who didn't necessarily have experience of finding an empty shop and speaking to landlords, speaking to property management companies. Ummm errr, so he was brokering those relationships essentially."

(CG_25022016_NH)

JP facilitated this co-operative relationship between commercial property owners and artists based on an oversupply of empty office spaces, and a lack of low cost studio space. Artists brought their imagined space to this process, using this to mentally reframe tired offices as galleries and studios. As mentioned previously, the ability to find and form space to their desires was crucial, as was the ability for each to feel a certain sense of ownership over the process.

CG went into further detail about the process of finding and securing Norham House.

> "So this building, Norham House had been offices for Muckles the solicitors and various other people on some of the other floors. They'd moved out as it was all going to be redeveloped so it was empty and they had the redevelopment plan, they had it, and they had a mock up in the Civic Centre. Then the recession happened and they lost their investment so it was all put on hold. So they were left with this big empty building having got rid of everyone umm, because the development was imminent and they were having to pay full business rates which for a building this size is pretty huge."
>
> (CG_25216_NH)

Interstitial spaces do not just spring into being – they are planned to some extent, formed through a distinct process of 'becoming'. Indeed, EPSB always had some form of plan attached to it; what is the 'mock up' of the block in the Civic Centre if not another form of spatial imaginary similar to those outlined before? As the property owners scrambled for new tenants, an oversupply of recent arts graduates were unable to afford space in the city's studio provision. However, what began as a short project transformed into an extended occupation:

> "They said you could have this shop for three months or why don't you have this big building…for a year… they decided to go for it because it was an amazing opportunity, you know, to take on the building."
>
> (CG_25216_NH)

Early residents negotiated occupancy of the empty offices and "received a few months free while they were setting up. Everyone got a bit of money, a few thousand towards actually building the studios" (PSCY_240216_CUH). This excerpt raises an interesting point around funding, and financial support. When we speak of the certain conditions that facilitate artistic practice there must be some recognition that these spaces do not exist independently. Even at this early stage, they planned to be funded in some way, even if this 'plan' was designed for the short term. Certain residents were

aware of, and keen to continue, the historical use of government money on artistic initiatives.

Alternatively, some residents expressed reticence to engage with, or be beholden to traditional art markets, referring to themselves as having their 'hands tied' by the amount of work that goes into continued funding. As ZA outlined:

> ZA: Well our charity is set up simply for the provision of affordable space in the city centre. It's not an artistic endeavour necessarily it's just a space.
>
> (ZA_270416_BH)

ZA demonstrates the organisational implications of the positioning through language explored earlier in the chapter, when artists were either commercial or non-commercial, institutional or interstitial. By positioning themselves either for or against funding, I watched as two contrasting approaches to artistic practice in interstitial space emerged. Indeed, in the transformation from a mental to a material space there was a cost that was not purely financial. Certain elements of the imaginary are discarded in order to sustain the actual. Whilst the spaces were planned in the imagination of artists, what form they would take was not, and could not have been known in advance. These spaces did not arise wholly from a blueprint but were incrementally shaped by multiple discourses, conflicts and imaginaries. The building provided a shell in which to work with no definition or clarity at the start to what shape it would take at the outset.

This extract from my fieldnotes demonstrates the process of formation:

> "they invited fellow artists and friends. First, they found the space, and then they decided the practice. Little by little they constructed a programme, then a residency, then screenings, talks, exhibitions and finally an educational programme."

(Fieldnotes_09032016_NH)

EPSB at the start facilitated an organisational structure that allowed a different way of being. Forming their spaces became an iterative process to understand who they were both as individuals and as potential organisations. As the following image demonstrates, before the new residents moved in each floor was entirely empty, stripped of its old identity as a commercial office.

*Figure 7: Floor of Commercial Union House before residents moved in*

Here, the informality and unfinished nature of the interstitial provides a space for the imagined. Indeed, the reliance on imagination, on unrealized possibilities was palpable. This excerpt was recorded two months into my fieldwork, on the fifth floor of Bamburgh House.

> Today I walked with MI around the sixth floor. It was late, the space was dark and quiet apart from traffic noise from outside. The sixth floor hasn't been occupied yet, there is no carpet and the strip lights are broken. The floor is, at the moment, one large open office – albeit with all of the desks and other

> detritus removed. Windows are ceiling to floor on three walls – they look out over Pilgrim Street. MI said she liked the space, she liked to walk around the floor before she knew what to do with it. It allowed her to see how the space could be used. She used the words, 'blank canvas'
>
> (Fieldnotes 31115)

For MI it was the aspect of the unknown, or the possible that was so exciting about practicing in Bamburgh House. The idea that a space 'could' be something was as powerful to her symbolically as it was practically. These spaces are not fixed they are fluid; and in this fluidity MI saw a possibility to create something by her own hand. In this way, working within interstitial space presented a new dwelling process, the need to transform and create space "to construct, to make something, to raise up an edifice" (Ingold 2000:185).The ability to find and form space with their hands was vital. Reconnecting residents with their ability to build, the interstitial space forms the connective tissue between imagination and agency. The interstitial is therefore a pause, a chance in which to make a change to the fabric of the city.

Smith (1993) writes on this theme that the, "differentiation of geographical scale establishes and is established through the geographical structure of social interactions" (Smith 1992:7). Therefore, we must begin with social interaction – and the assertion that space is generated from the ground up, from the body. If the space is generated from the body, it is anchored to the community and cannot be repeated in another place or in another time. Tension arises when this fluid, bodily space is re-packaged as a model by policy makers, attempting to utilise the creative industries as a driver for economic growth. The spaces are a form of artwork, and, like art, the buildings and their communities are transient: like a musical performance, repetition bears imperceptible changes with each iteration.

## 4.2 Transforming Space

The chapter opened with a consideration of how imagination was both a powerful tool and a precursor to material development. I then moved on to the process of finding, and funding space based on these embodied desires; for more light, heat or the freedom to create. Furthermore, the type of constraints that act against this fluid, spatial creation. The second section of the chapter turns to how the residents of EBPS incrementally transformed their physical environment. City centre space is bounded, a collection of demarcations designed to manage complex flows of people, capital and ideas. What happened when these spatial imaginaries met the bounded, visible space of a city centre? In exploring this question, I aim to outline what is distinctive about these spaces. The idea is to create a vignette and transport the reader into the unique space that, in some instances, no longer physically exists. Again, the aim is to develop a nuanced, in-depth understanding of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt 1994).

### 4.2.1 Mapping Interventions

Although mapping artistic provision across the city was not one of my original aims, early conversations repeatedly reflected on the past as a means of demonstrating how unique EPSB was as a space in Newcastle upon Tyne. I feel it is important to explore what artistic provision there was in the city before EPSB, what conditions led to this desire for space that was, as explored above, collaborative, warm, and central.

Research using a dwelling perspective must recognise that any ‘being-in-the-world’ is a result of ‘being-in-that-world’ and a sense of historicity framed through prior

experiences. The first image demonstrates the spread of artistic activity through Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead prior to EPSB.

*Figure 8: Representation of artistic activity across Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead before EPSB*

The second image is of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead after 2015 when the majority of buildings in EPSB were occupied. Instead of scattered pockets of activity across the city centre, we see two areas of activity: EPSB and Ouseburn.

*Figure 9: Artistic activity across Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead after 2011 (2015)*

From the two images, we can see how concentrated activity became over a period of 5 years, moving from the periphery to the core, from the margins of the city into its centre. Whilst Ouseburn remained as a 'hub' of artistic activity other spaces formed, and dissipated on the whims of private property owners.

Naturally, this second map does not aim to be comprehensive of all artistic activity, being drawn solely from the experiences of the artists I encountered during my fieldwork. I have included a map of these disparate locations firstly as an indication of how geographically spread artistic activity was both in Newcastle upon Tyne and across the river in Gateshead. The map also emerged as an illustration of how unique EPSB was as a spatial moment. I do not claim that either of these images are wholly representative of the often hidden artistic practice within the city. However, residents of EPSB continually re-iterated that this was the first time they had experienced this level of concentrated, diverse artistic activity within the city centre. They felt seen, acknowledged - if not wholly accepted.

This adds to Le Strat's (2007) conceptualisation of the interstitial. He described interstitial space as not existing independently, but "realized and modulated according to the (lived, perceived) intensity of its creations and experiments" (Le Strat 2007:4). Whilst this conceptualisation stresses the *human* agency in creating urban space, it neglects the lack of agency on the behalf of the artists, as well as the hidden, informal network of shopkeepers and publicans whose empty spaces are re-framed as studios and theatres. Furthermore, it is not 'bought into being' it is planned to some extent, even if these 'plans' only exist in the mind.

### 4.2.2 Footprint on the Ground

Whilst the images above demonstrate how artistic activity had coalesced into the city centre, I now turn to addressing the built environment as it stood at the start of my fieldwork. This is to demonstrate the physical boundaries of the block when, for the residents within EPSB, space was always in space was always in motion, always in a state of 'becoming'. Indeed, the physical space was just one iteration of the thousands of imagined spaces. Additionally, the map below is an attempt to ground the following within the built environment of Newcastle City Centre. In doing so, it serves to re-iterate how unique EPSB was as a spatial moment.

*Figure 10: The East Pilgrim Street Block (EPSB) with Norham House in pink, Commercial Union House in yellow and Bamburgh House in Blue.*

Whilst the physical space and boundaries of EPSB remained static - large brutalist buildings hemmed in by retail and commercial development - within the block there was a multiplicity of opportunity. There was also a sense of excitement that came with this opportunity. W and W called their new space, 'The NewBridge *Project*'

suggesting something always in motion, molded by its members. The contrast between such immovable physical structures and an artistic practice prone to flux reiterates my contention that interstitial space presents a new dwelling process established through the structure of social interactions.

At the start of my fieldwork each building was operated by a separate organization. Norham House (pink) housed the NewBridge Project, formed of NewBridge Studios, NewBridge Books and an exhibition space. Norham House was also home to MakerSpace, a small space predominantly for tech and digital makers, and Alphabetti Theatre in the basement space. Commercial Union House (yellow) had stratified with each floor under a different organisation but managed by a collective of residents under the name 'White Box'. Bamburgh House (blue) housed Breeze Creatives.

### 4.2.3 Façade of normalcy

Despite their commanding size, these are buildings that have disappeared from people's vision. They are a spatial form of 'white noise' – a presence on the skyline but not actively engaged with or seen. As Newcastle City Council write, EPSB is for them "lies within the city centre but in many ways cut off from the life of the city" (Newcastle City Council 2016:7). We can speculate on what the 'life of the city' means in this instance, but I was reminded of Tonkiss' description of urban spaces "given over to retail consumption and rapid transit … a "frenetic cycle of urban obsolescence, investment and intervention" (Tonkiss 2013:320). This invisibility is not an accident, rather a product of dominant cultural hegemonies that choose which aspects of urban life are worth validation.

Curious about this invisibility I took opportunities during my fieldwork to ask what passing residents, people working outside of EPSB, and even friends and family made of the buildings. General conversations about EPSB with people who were not involved in the arts sector usually elicited a confused response. Descriptions were vague, hard to elicit. To the people on the street in Newcastle City Centre, the buildings represented an ugly eyesore. They recognised the Tyneside Cinema, located across the street, but not the filmmakers in Commercial Union House, seeing one as a treasured part of Newcastle's cinematic heritage and the other as nearing dereliction and devoid of activity.

Furthermore, reflecting on my own awareness and understanding of EPSB before fieldwork, I was, as many others convinced that the 'cultural' area of Newcastle was in Ouseburn and nowhere else. EPSB for myself, as for many others, was where we could catch the quickest bus to the Metrocentre Shopping Centre.

Whilst artistic practice gave meaning and a new identity to an unused space, this meaning did not translate past the sector. EPSB was not a space you would venture into, or 'happen upon' as the result of a wrong turn or touristic intent. As AP explained,

> "they [Newcastle council] never mention these buildings because they don't want to because they're rancid. From the outside. And then you walk in and you're like wow…."
>
> (AP_200116_AT).

This is not to argue that the residents of EPSB did not engage with the outside world; rather, this engagement was done within the usual confines of working practice. That is, the space opened up for events such as The Late Shows (an annual open studios event across Newcastle and Gateshead) or for public lectures, but this was mediated

by the working lives of residents. It was, all things considered, a working environment and would engage the public as much as this work required.

Therefore, EPSB remained 'hidden' in two senses. Both hidden from the street, as the images below demonstrate, and hidden from general awareness. The open lobbies facing the street spoke little of the work happening within. AP described this as a 'façade of normalcy' – to the casual observer the brick and concrete of EPSB was another example of tired, worn office buildings visible across the Newcastle skyline. Indeed, as the building's demolition had been planned and then cancelled on so many occasions, one can understand how the buildings had all but disappeared from the public consciousness – a demolition before demolition. A mental clearance before the first wrecking ball moved in.

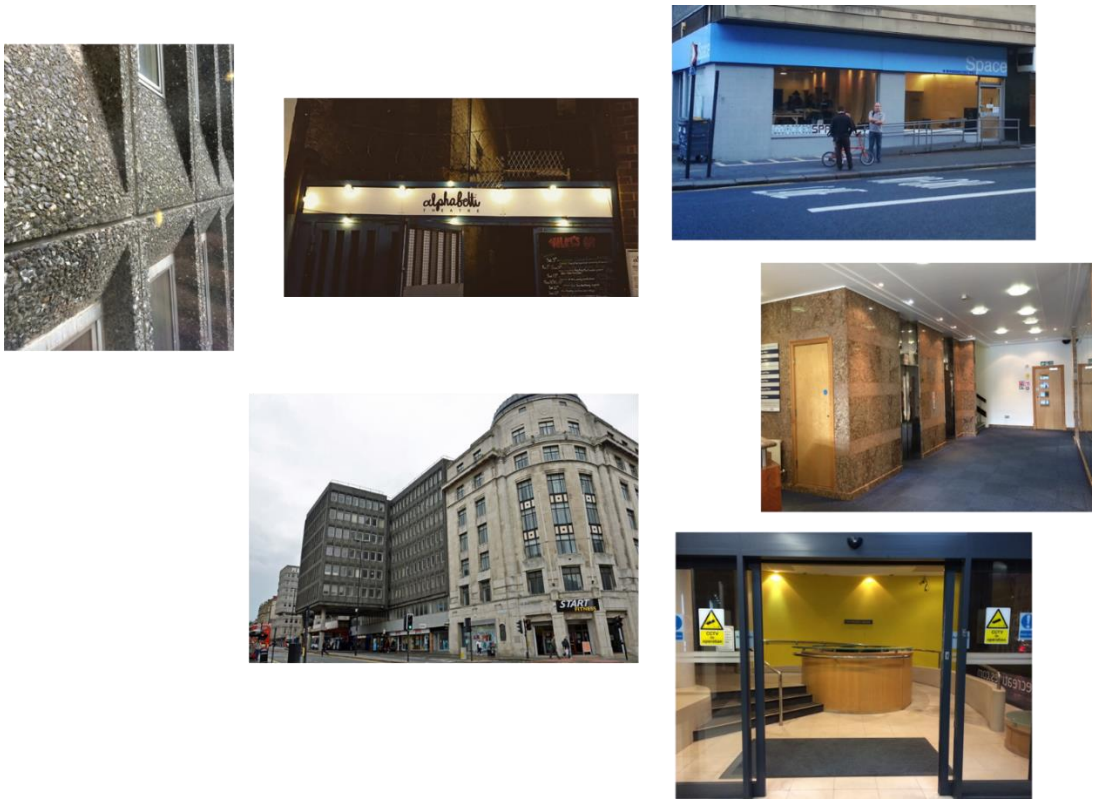


*Figure 11: View from the street: the outside space of EPSB*

Here was an entire block of the city in which to experiment, and remedy the difficulties of constant relocation. A city block with the promise of a shared curatorial vision, for more light, for more space. The promise of a familiar, informal environment in which to make new, exciting work.

### 4.2.4 Spatial Echoes

An excerpt from my fieldnotes surmises leaving the street and entering Commercial Union House. Recorded early in my fieldwork, it retains an air of the 'initial strangeness' (Jorgensen 1989) I felt when confronted with this new, unfamiliar environment.

> "I entered via a mirrored lobby. The concierge on the door has been working in the building for 6 years, reading the paper and monitoring the screens that offer a fragmented bird's eye view of the street outside. Three lifts service the seven floors, though from the soft mechanical noises that herald their arrival, they may have seen better days. Scared of the lift, I choose to take the stairs. My footsteps are softened by thick green carpet, now stained. Each floor has a sign leftover from previous residents. Some have been amended, some stay blank. On the sixth floor the ceiling is low, dotted with fluorescent lights. The maroon carpet is stained and imprinted with the marks of computer desks and chairs that filled the (once) office space"
>
> (Fieldnotes_290915_CUH).

There were glimpses of what the spaces used to be both internally, as described in my fieldnotes, and externally. The old Odeon sign still hung on the building outside, and doors bore the remains of prior occupants details hastily scraped away. The image below demonstrates this incremental repurposing of office space for artistic production.

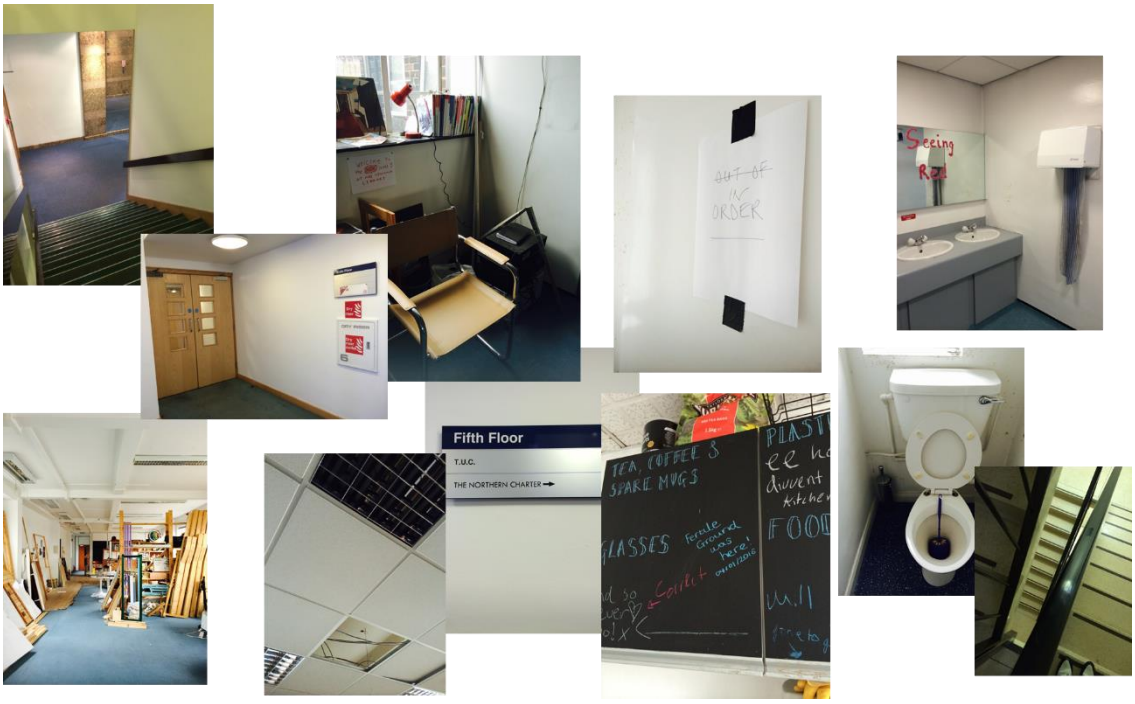


*Figure 12: Traces of offices in EPSB*

Over time, EPSB became a reflection of the varied people and practices within it. As Marx is quoted as saying, "People can see nothing around them that is not in their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves" (Marx quoted in Debord 1958:2).

### 4.2.5 Practicalities

There were certain practicalities that came with occupying old offices built more than 30 years earlier. The reality of the poor structural state of the old buildings quickly became apparent. AB described moving in to Bamburgh House after signing the lease.

> "It's such a badly dated building. If it was really old it might be ok but it's this 1960's - 70's and it's just terrible.
>
> DG: It was slow initially because we moved in, turned the water on and the building exploded. It was everywhere, pouring down the lifts …pouring out of the front of the building.
>
> INT: Did the landlord not tell you about any of this before you moved in?

AB: No.”

(ABDG_270416_BH)

To begin with, any art making was secondary to making the building safe. There was no heating, little electricity and concrete walls that successfully stopped any Wi-Fi within the building. Making the space suitable involved installing stud walls, rewiring alongside a clean-up operation that filled 10 skips. This excerpt perfectly outlines the gap between the imagined and the actual. Whilst my findings outlined how artists imagine their space, including their ideal space, there remains a stark contrast between what they imagine and what they can actually create.

### 4.2.6 Aesthetic Implications

This marginality has implications for the look of the spaces. The images below demonstrate the aesthetic implications that came with making their spaces suitable for art making with little time, money or experience in architecture.

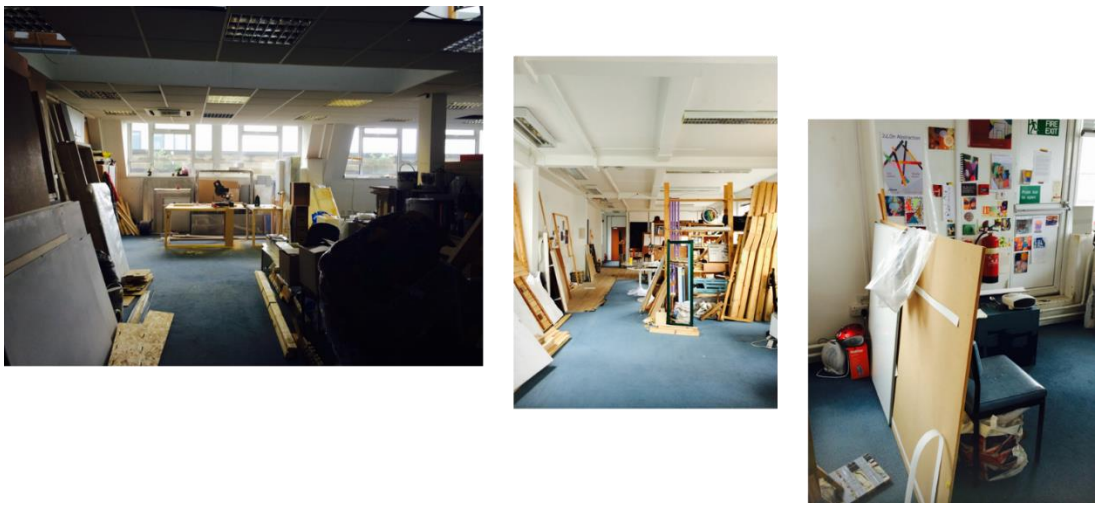

*Figure 13: Studio spaces in Norham House*

Struggling with the practical technicalities of construction, for the first residents of Norham House, this was an incremental process. CG described the upper floors:

> "I guess it's like a shanty town essentially of bits being added on here, and bits of wood coming out of there. Umm but I think there's something really nice about that, that the artists can design their own thing and imagine the space and create the space they work in and make individual spaces. So what we have invested is less of a monetary thing and more of a time…labour of love type thing."
>
> (CG_25216_NH)

There is something romantic about the way CG describes the translation of their own imagined space onto the built environment. The idea that a studio space can involve as much personal investment in terms of time and money as a physical artwork is interesting. The only way to make a space live up to the imagined space for the residents of EPSB was to form it themselves.

With the majority of residents entirely self-taught, building and designing became a 'labour of love'. When the extent of the neglect of the old buildings became apparent, rebuilding the spaces to their own design offered a practical, cheap means of making the buildings work. In this, EPSB echoes Lefebvre's contention that "each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space" (Lefebvre 1991: 169-70). These processes provided a tangible example of how the residents of EPSB brought their space into being (Ingold 2011). These processes were emergent, bending and shifting dependent on time, materials and ability.

They undertook a huge amount of physical labour themselves, which started with building stud walls:

> "what we have done to the spaces is I mean especially here…it's very ad hoc like, I don't know if you've been to the higher floors and the studios …when they used to be open plan and over the years we've gradually built temporary walls, stud walls. But they've all been built with the different artists so they all

> look different, they're all individual, they used different materials ummm perhaps what was lying around at that time, what was left over an exhibition and got taken up there. I mean although we've invested time, I feel like what we've done is a response to the temporary nature of the building…knowing that we're not going to have it forever and so we've responded by creating temporary interventions in the building. And that is actually part of the lease, you're not meant to change …everything you do is meant to be returnable."
>
> (CG_25216_NH)

As CG describes, residents with EPSB built spaces based on their desires but within their means. Consequently, the building became a form of cultural allotment, both informal and diverse in its design.

This process was not without more commercial benefits. This incremental process meant some residents found an aptitude for construction work. For one resident, working on Norham House meant that he could develop their craft on a large-scale development project and then transfer those skills (planning, building) onto other projects. TILT design, fabricate and install for artists and galleries as well as provide commercial and domestic joinery services and educational workshops for graduates. This company was conceived in Norham House, using the building as a way of developing their skills and, in the end, a showcase of their design work. When the lease was signed for Bamburgh House three years later, AB and DG hired TILT for the construction work in their space. As AB explained:

> AB: TILT built this bar. We did decide at the beginning, that with that building everyone's getting up there and doing their own work but with this we wanted the quality. And with all the projects, because this building is just one project of the many we do, we didn't want to take all of the time up with a shoddy decorating job.
>
> DG: Spending years slowly building each floor and painting it all."
>
> (ABDG_270416_BH)

AB and DG's description of how they undertook the renovation of Bamburgh House is a significant shift from CG in Norham House. After the burst pipes destroyed much of the infrastructure within the building they decided to invest heavily in the material space of Bamburgh House. Both AB and DG aimed for professionalism in design. As the image below demonstrates, the studios in Bamburgh House were identical, clean white boxes.

*Figure 14: Studios in Bamburgh House*

For AB and DG, their building was the sole source of their funding, a showcase as well as space for fostering collaborations. BC referred to it as a 'magnet', the professional design would attract potential residents. They performed little of the physical labour:

"INT: So how much of the work to this building did you do yourselves?

AB: Actually like us with hammer and nails?

INT: Yeah…

AB: Very little,

DG: Well we decided initially that we wanted to do it high quality. Whereas if we did it, it would be a bit higgledy-piggledy because we're not professional joiners. So it was like, yeah we'll do it properly and employ proper people.

AB: Because we basically …again through looking at other people around us…there's something missing in terms of, you've got Baltic 39 which is very plush and very expensive. And you've got the rest of the block where you've got NewBridge where they've got everyone making their own space.

DG: Like a shanty town…

AB: It's not really a professional build but we wanted something in between. A feeder for Baltic 39 that was still affordable. I think we managed to do it.

(ABDG_270416_BH)

Their design choices were strategic decisions based on a perceived market gap. AB and DG designed Bamburgh House as a middle ground between Norham House's 'shanty town' and Baltic 39's 'plushness'. This is an entirely different outlook to NewBridge in Norham House. There, the building is an extension of their artwork; it is as much a reflection of their practice as the other physical artefacts of their artmaking. Through a process of 'becoming' formed by two distinctive notions of space, the material space of EPSB becomes a visual reflection of each organisation's

approach to artmaking in interstitial space. Spatial characteristics are, for the residents of EPSB indicative of a wider ethos and approach to artistic practice. The buildings became a banner that represented their 'tribe' – drawing other likeminded artists to them and rewarding them with similar identities, value systems and ideologies.

### 4.2.7 Building a hub or the 'temporary communal'

I mentioned earlier in the chapter that interstitial space does not 'emerge' – it is planned to some extent, formed out of an iterative relationship with the built environment. My fieldwork revealed that the shared characteristic across the block was the planning and execution of a hub space for communal use. To go back to CG, she mentioned,

> "We call it a membership to the NewBridge Project, and it's about…it's about creating, it's about being a member of this community, of this network."
>
> (CG_25216_NH)

The NewBridge Project is a collective of visual artists working in Norham House on the northern side of EPSB. Late into my fieldwork, whilst sharing a cup of coffee, CG raised an interesting point by referring to NewBridge, not as an organisation or initiative as outlined in the literature review, but as a 'membership', a 'community' and a 'network'. This came up in conversation across EPSB, with residents sharing their desire to become part of something larger than themselves. This desire was reflected in their spatial imaginaries.

As both Negus and Pickering (2000) and Lingo & Tepper (2013) demonstrated in Chapter 2, the idea of artistic practice is shifting from an individualistic determination to a more collectively oriented endeavour. A model of artistic production based on an inherent collectivity and collaboration has supplanted the myth of the lone artistic

genius. I return to the notion of membership and networked practice in more depth in Chapter 5.

Both care and attention were given to planning the spaces, facilitating this collaborative practice. As AB demonstrated,

> "Whereas I know in the beginning days of Commercial there was talk of having a big communal areas for everyone to mix and I think that's the most beneficial part we found with this building is that, the kind of cross pollination between all the different practices when people get to see who's in the building when they get to share this space. This is the, temporarily it is, the communal."
>
> (AB_27416_BH)

Once a solicitors' office, the space was given a new identity, one that reflected the communal ethos of this form of artistic practice. In Space Six, the first iteration of a new spatial identity was a hub space in the centre of the floor. The communal hub was designed to offer a space away from individual studios for residents to relax, talk and hold meetings and events. The hub was the first element of the space to be marked out, with studios branching off. All members could use the hub, as could others who were interested in renting the space for their own events. The images below show the hub in its various incarnations; meeting room, rehearsal space and library.

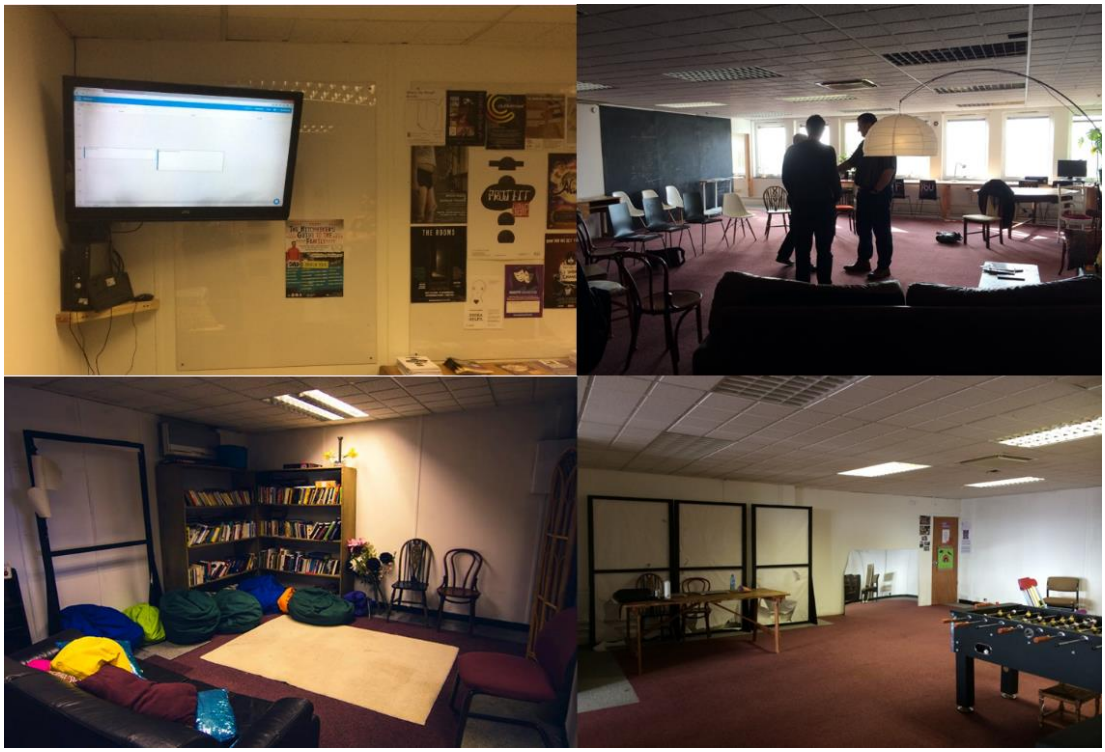

*Figure 15: The hub in Space Six, Commercial Union House*

During the later stage of my fieldwork, the hub became a bookable space, available for hire. The residents of Space Six realised simultaneously that a large open space was a potential source of income and, in addition, that a space shared by separate groups rehearsing simultaneously often lead to conflict as much as collaboration. The communal ethos the block was founded on did not always work in practice.

Residents claimed and began the process of transforming the buildings of EPSB. Although Commercial Union House was 'imagined' as a communal building, in reality each floor was rented by individual organisations, with representatives from each floor forming an organising committee. In Bamburgh House, how space was divided was hard to gauge – for AB it depended on practice and materials. He recognised that the dust and noise created by a plaster cast sculptor were not particularly conducive to delicate painting. In Norham House dividing the space

involved different processes; in one instance, it was described akin to a colonisation – to planting the flag in a new land. As WS summarised:

> "Well people came in and they said, umm, they would build their own space so. They'd say I'll have this space here so they'd build a wall there…build a wall there. That's how it first started."
>
> (WS_310116_CUH)

This transformation raises practical issues about making artwork. I reflected on this during my first week in the field:

> "The spaces are shared. "A corridor with no locked doors – people walk past and prod work that is still wet. Place things – books, food wrappers – on top of work. No walls between studios means constant negotiation over little things like the volume of the radio, or big things like mixing resin (and the powerful smell it creates). Speaking with T, someone she knows (she wouldn't say who) came into her space and stole her paper scissors. Someone else, (she knows but wouldn't say who) came in and moved her work so they could climb onto the outside ledge (it does have an amazing view). Now she wants to build a wall."
>
> (Fieldnotes_030816_NH)

The image below demonstrates the makeshift wall T built by dismantling a table and propping it between her space and her neighbors.

*Figure 16: Makeshift wall in Norham House*

As the image demonstrates, the wall was more of a symbolic gesture than a practical solution to the issue of noise or theft. The noise from the CD player in the bottom corner still filled her studio, and the chair that held the wall in place had a habit of slowly slipping forward until it all collapsed. What the image draws our attention to is the incremental process of spatial creation. What was chance hardens into convention. However, within this convention is a fluidity that continually reshapes the way in which people, materials, ideas and resources come together. This 'bringing into being'

involves a constant process of negotiation according to the (lived, perceived) intensity of its creations and experiments (Le Strat 2007).

## 4.3 Negotiating Space

This chapter has explored the process of spatial creation within interstitial space, drawing from the experiences of residents within EPSB. In as much as the site reflects wider collaboration between policy makers, planners and artists, EPSB was also a site of contestation and conflict both internally and externally. Becoming involved a cost that was not purely financial. The process of spatial creation within interstitial space involved an emotional cost, of friendships lost through disagreements, and the loss of communal space to a bookings system in order to produce a form of sustainable income. There was the temporal cost of hours spent renovating the building, painting walls rather than canvases.

I want to act against the romanticisation of artist-led spaces as paradigms of bohemian freeness. The transformation of the built environment around a shared curatorial vision produced an inescapable tension within the block, primarily over what to call this new formation. If the spaces are in a constant process of 'becoming', what they were becoming was something fiercely debated and highly contested during the course of my fieldwork. In February 2016, certain residents decided to combine their operations under a 'Creative Quarter'. They felt that this would legitimise their practice, and their continued presence in EPSB. This post-hoc designation was designed to help them in the continued fight against eviction. In becoming a Creative Quarter they hoped for recognition from a council engrossed in the process of transforming the rest of the city

centre into quarters – the Grey Quarter by the imposing statue of (Earl) Charles Grey and the Stephenson Quarter behind Central Station at the time had just been announced. Becoming a Creative Quarter would mean they could make a stand against "renaming the entire city centre after rich white dead men" (MI_14012016_CUH). However, this idea was not wholly shared:

> P: I call it the East Pilgrim Street area. I do not call it Creative Quarter…that is not, that is not… Well it's a name that we weren't consulted about it. We don't actually recognise it and umm quite strongly don't recognise it.
>
> (PS_260216_CUH)

Tensions arose from the lack of communication between individual organisations. P. felt deliberately excluded from the conversations around naming the block, finding it ironic that those conversations concerned a collective designation. Again, the imagined space of the communal rubs up against the material space of EPSB.

In addition, unique tensions arose within Commercial Union House resulting from their organisation. Whereas Norham House is run as one organisation (NewBridge) Commercial Union House has stratified with a different organisation on each floor.

> "Interrupted a conversation about another company who are moving from this building to somewhere else (didn't manage to find out where) because it's 'not working out here'. This isn't the first instance of this happening. WS whispered, 'this space is almost totalitarian at times'"
>
> (Fieldnotes_230216_CUH).

Finally, if East Pilgrim Street block acts as foci for the networked practices of artists an interesting point arose out of their shared residency with the building's commercial clients. AB and DG reflected on these aspects of working within Commercial Union House

> "INT: Big plans. Talking about those commercial tenants…how did you negotiate with them?

AB: There wasn't really any negotiation.

DG: They were in there already.

AB: They were in there already and the landlord knew that they were basically doing things like paying for heating or the lifts to be serviced so slotting us in between them just took a huge rate saving for the landlord so it was kind of an easy decision for them. The kind of, blockage halfway up the building with commercial people, it does ruin the flow a little bit. Whereas here we had a blank canvas, didn't we?

DG: With the commercial tenants as well, having to do certain procedures that you have to have for commercial clients."

(ABDG_270416_BH)

AB recognised the practical benefits of commercial clients paying in part for heating or servicing the lifts. However in his terms the artists are 'dynamic', they 'flow'. The commercial tenants are a 'blockage' disrupting the informal and precarious set of practices the interstitial engenders. This is echoed in the following section from my field notes

"WS is cleaning; they are having an event on Friday night. He is concerned that no one will turn up although he has sent out invitation emails. I ask if he can put some posters up around the building maybe. That's not an option; the commercial tenants don't like it. They keep to themselves, they don't really engage with the events or the other residents here."

(Fieldnotes_270316_CUH)

Both my fieldnotes and conversations with residents reflected on the commercial clients continued presence. After extensive negotiation, residents of Commercial Union House were still unable to advertise their work in certain areas:

"DG: Also, things like no signage on the front of organisations, and you can't put posters up on the lifts.

INT: Oh, are you not allowed?

DG: No, not in the stairwell or anything.

AB: People try still

DG: You can put them up temporarily after the end of the day when the commercial tenants have gone on the floor, but they have to be down again for the next morning. If you have a floor of solicitors and they're bringing clients in you can't really have…

INT: I didn't even think about advertising you work

DG: No sign on the front door either. So, walking past you wouldn't know what's there. It's just an office block."

(ABDG_270416_BH)

For AB and DG, this formed one of many tiny encroachments on their inventive, informal artistic practice. However, for the commercial clients, Commercial Union House had not undergone a dramatic shift to a space of artistic production – it was, and remains, their place of work. In Adler's (2003:84) terms this "marriage to conventional society" meant that two conflicting demands held the new residents of Commercial Union House in tension. They must conform to commercial clients' standards to create a professional environment suitable for both solicitors and sculptors. At the same time, they must project the building as a space for both the production and consumption of art.

Although they share the same physical site, the artists understand the theoretical 'distance' between them and the buildings commercial clients. Their imaginaries, materialities and practices interlock and often clash within the manifold overlapping topologies. The commercial clients occupy the same physical space, but not the same relational space. In this way, artists operate on a different space/time to the commercial clients. Therefore, two bodies can occupy the same physical space (for example the fifth floor of Commercial Union House) whilst contemporaneously occupying different conceptual spaces. Interstitial space exists but not for everyone in the

physical space, it is a relational space that arises out of certain embodied and networked practices between specific actors within areas of urban disinvestment.

This proximity can also facilitate interesting collaborations with commercial clients both within and outside of the block. Muckles the solicitors, who moved out of the block into new office in anticipation of its redevelopment, now provided sponsorship and support to the NewBridge project. Earlier in the chapter, I described how property owners formed an informal network of patrons in surprising places. Muckles Solicitors, by providing vocal support of the artistic work in EPSB, as well as financial support, add to a support network that is fluid, removed from traditional sources.

This was not the only example of negotiation with commercial organisations. Adapting their practice to the particular environment of EPSB, ZA and DG have negotiated with a company providing receptionists to operate their front desk. As they described:

> ZA: It actually just happened to be in the building…and they came in and said 'it's kind of weird that you don't have your front of house open'. And we'd never worked with people like that and we didn't know anything about it so we thought, well, we'll try it and it's been the best thing we've done. But then we never would have known that because we're just not in that sector so the more we introduce ourselves to people outside of the sector the more we realise actually there is a lot available for us, we just need to learn their mindset."
>
> (ABDGZA_270416_BH)

The company received free office space, on the basis that they supplied Bamburgh House with receptionists as they trained. Practically, this collaboration with organisations outside of the sector meant a reduction on operating costs. However, I think this excerpt raises an interesting point about arts funding. NewBridge were content to have Muckles as a form of patron, providing financial support indirectly whilst receiving further support from traditional forms of funding such as Arts Council

England, the National Lottery and, on occasion, the city council. Breeze Creatives in Bamburgh House rejected the notion of support from large funding bodies. As emphasised earlier, receiving funding from large institutions left ZA feeling as though she had her 'hands tied'. Cross sector collaborations, such as those outlined above, provided an opportunity to "learn their mindset", to engage directly with commercial enterprises in order to develop an organisation structure independent from traditional funding models. There is a correlation in this between the actions of ZA and the entrepreneurial narrative explored in Chapter 2. Art making for ZA is a business and therefore should be recognisable as such, approached as any other capitalistic enterprise (Kelly 1974).

This new relationship was, for ZA, achieved through being *visible* - their physical presence in Bamburgh House and in the city centre acting as a symbol for the creative potential in urban space - for other possibilities, and new relationships. This visibility was planned from the outset. As CG outlined, the idea behind a physical space was to have somewhere that was a showcase for work, a source of funding and a platform for residents. The buildings are big symbols: they command space. EPSB takes up an entire block in the city centre. If the development of EPSB indicated a new permissive urban policy on the part of Newcastle City Council, EPSB was a large symbol. Questions remain, however, over how symbolic EPSB could be when for the wider city the block remained 'hidden'. Nevertheless, for residents there was "a benefit to having a location to...to influence people from" (NQ_060716_CUH). This idea of influence, and the ability to have and use this influence was raised throughout my fieldwork. No more so than in February 2016 as a group of residents got together to write a White Paper in response to the news of impending demolition. Representatives from several organisations within the block collaboratively wrote a response to The

Places Challenge as part of the Industrial Strategy white paper. The document aimed to argue for the social and economic value of keeping artistic activity within EPSB. They write:

> "The support and recognition of local and central government is key to the survival and continuation of these organisations and models of working. It is essential that it remains possible for these projects to continue to develop in the future … embedding these initiatives into redevelopment strategies at a local level, to protecting rates relief for creative business"
>
> (A Golding and Representatives of East Pilgrim Street Feb 2016)

On the one hand, this excerpt demonstrates a desire for institutional recognition and support. They suggest work cannot continue independently, therefore, there must be some form of institutional support for interstitial space.

I want to reflect on the notion that this critical mass made residents of EPSB feel unusually powerful in their conversations with legislative bodies. Whilst in Foucaultian terms, to be seen is to be managed, EPSB provided the opportunity to renegotiate this hierarchical relationship. They used their visibility as a platform for negotiation, believing that their presence had "creaked a door open…but it's a very big door" (MI_171215_CUH).

As PS re-iterated "the 'power' is very close. It's only five minutes' walk away" (PS_260216_CUH). 'Power' in this instance meant Newcastle City Council; as a small city, EPSB is close to the council both spatially and socially. Indeed, the residents of EPSB maintained an almost symbiotic relationship with Newcastle City Council. Councillors attended meetings and exhibition openings. They gave speeches during events and toured the studios. Having provided the initial funding, they had a stake in maintaining contact with the residents and using the block's activities as a beacon of the creativity and inventiveness of the North East. It is a symbiotic relationship, but

one that is not entirely equal; the sense of power on the side of EPSB is precarious, dependent on their continued occupation of prominent city centre space.

The tension between ownership and occupation has significant implications for the residents of EPSB. Ownership gave the artists working in Lime Street and Cobalt Studios in Ouseburn the right to modify the building, subject to government and deed restrictions. Ownership protects them from eviction. Whilst the process of occupying space might offer radical alternatives to the current models of territory and control (Hodkinson 2012) whilst ownership remains in the hands of private property owners EPSB's residents must bend to forms of economic, social and spatial control (Tonnelat 2008). EPSB's relationship with the council reflected Soren's (2012) assertion that occupying space can never be a synonym for independence and self-reliance due to the constant compromise and negotiation with local governance. Whilst the land is either controlled or monitored by the institutions either in change or with claims of ownership over the land, the interstice is never a true space of escape. Following Tonnelat (2008) the interstice appears to be acting as a "margin of manoeuvre of a dominant order" (Tonnelat 2008:303), at risk of replicating normative ideas over spatial sovereignty.

# Chapter Five

## 5. Being and Becoming in the East Pilgrim Street Block

### 5.1 Introduction: On Dwelling Differently

Whilst Chapter 4 explored EPSB in spatial terms, I now move on to a consideration of the multiple diverse artistic practices the block engendered. Art is an embodied practice, so I want to think about both the art these interstitial spaces produce, and the residents producing the art. Place must be *felt* to make sense, therefore I wanted to explore what it *felt* like to live and work in EPSB. Through this, my research presents an unreplicable insight into the processes and meanings that sustain EPSB: These processes and meanings are place-bound and place-making.

The aim was to produce a more embodied, relational account, attempting to capture the ephemeral, and the fleeting, and draw together the complex experiences of the block's residents. Whilst art making has been positioned as 'extraordinary' this research recognises that, for the residents of EPSB it is an everyday practice, it is routine. Therefore, I take art making within the context of this research as "experimental studies in the experiential realm of the daily" (Highmore 2002:31). By drawing upon both the art and the lifeworlds of artists, I hope to illuminate the connection between the lived experience of artists and the spatial worlds they construct.

This chapter begins by making the contention that EPSB represents a form of 'dwelling differently' that is removed from traditional art systems of production and consumption. The everyday becomes a lens through which we can explore, in depth, the actual situated and embedded practices within EPSB. I argue that terms like place making simplify, normalise or occlude methods of composing everyday life that entail much less stability or calculation than those terms would seem to connote (Simone 2011:269). Following Simone (2004, 2010), what follows is a consideration of the 'below-the-radar' set of small actions that are necessary to maintain life and work in precarious informal conditions (Pieterse 2008:113).

## 5.2 On 'becoming' a Resident

I begin by turning to the processes involved in becoming a resident of EPSB; how do artists find the block, what continued to draw them to it, and why do they choose to practice within it? Furthermore, is there some correlation between their practice and why they choose to practice within EPSB? As with the previous chapter, I think it is important to look at the minute details of how spaces such as EPSB form. However, whilst the previous chapter focused on the built environment I now turn to the embodied experiences of residents. How do these spaces attract artists and how do these artists become residents? The focus is on 'being there' or 'being present' in the physical and emotional sense. This is, in part, a response to the gap in the literature concerning the Creative City. As outlined, much of the literature focuses on experiences in situ, and less on the process of 'becoming'.

My fieldwork revealed an intricate process of attraction, placing EPSB firmly within a heterogeneous, global network of artists. Indeed, EPSB became an attraction in two senses of the word. Firstly, the almost magnetic pull that drew in artists from across the North East, but also in the physical sense, the scale of activity within these old offices is somewhat of a local landmark for those of a certain disposition, an oddity or attraction offering all night parties, exhibitions and performances. There was as much as a social pull as anything else. In this instance, the lure of cheap studio space in the city centre combined with the opportunity to 'plug in' to this vibrant, collaborative community of peers was ideal. Over coffee (as with most conversations), I asked CG how vital EPSB was to artists in Newcastle. She replied,

> "CG: Yeah, lots said they wouldn't be able to practice anymore…they might move to where there was a kind of vibrant cultural life."
>
> (CG_07102016_NH)

This vibrancy drew in artists from across the North East, and further afield. Operating both spatially and in network terms, the blocks networks took artists from the local, and the confines of the sheer physicality of EPSB, to the global. Yet, they were not predominantly market based; these networks existed to share information, discuss collaborations or facilitate growing friendships.

'Artists' became 'Residents' through a slow, elaborate process of push and pull. To become a resident, one first had to know what you were becoming a resident of. Take LG's experience:

> "I met LG at a workshop at NewBridge. We both reached for the coffee at the same time and chatted about the necessity of caffeine to get through the day. LG is from Middlesbrough. She graduated from Northumbria and, rather than move to London, wanted to continue to practice in Newcastle. She found out

about NewBridge ‘the same way as everyone else I suppose’ during her studies. The ‘same way’ being the hand drawn posters dotted about campus, and pinned onto notice boards. Her friend had volunteered at an event here last year and loved it. Her hands move wildly as she talks about the space. She’s excited, smiling. Now she’s on the waiting list for a studio.”

(Fieldnotes_11102016_NH)

Alongside the hand drawn posters, the block had a strong digital presence; both social media and individual organisations websites drove visibility and engagement. Materials drawn by residents meant the block set itself apart, marketed as an art space (look what residents produced, you can produce this too), and supported their position as the hub of inventive artistic practice, and the pinnacle of practice in the city.


*Figure 17: Event Posters*

Events acted as a scoping exercise, open studios sold both the work and the spaces to potential residents. Newcastle became an artistic circular economy - local universities acted as a feeder introducing art students to the organisations within EPSB during their studies. EPSB then acted as a final destination, a signifier of the move from student to professional artist.

## 5.3 On Membership

Responsive perhaps to the desire for a community, or for a ready-made network in transient space, to become a resident in NewBridge you had to first become a 'member'. These memberships were tiered from an Associate Member (access to events and discounts on workshops), Hot Desking Member (access to the shared co-work space and facilities) and Full Studio Member. The latter provided Studio space as well as a certain amount of storage.

This membership process evolved over time. To begin with, friends of friends, acquaintances and colleagues in need of studio space grew the community organically. What had begun as co-incidence hardened into convention. However, with space at a premium, the membership process ensured an egalitarian approach to studio allocation based on both practice and potential. The membership applications were always oversubscribed. To become a 'member' you need to have some appreciation of what you are joining. Memberships themselves are responsive to the desire for a community, for a network in transient material space. Similarly, by having a successful membership programme, NewBridge signified its ability to respond to artists wants and needs.

Becoming a Studio Member involved an intense three stage process; submitting a portfolio of work, answering an online questionnaire and if successful in this round, attending a panel interview. In this interview, questions from existing members would

determine the suitability of the new (potential) member. The criteria for membership in the NewBridge Project was outlined in detail on their website. They write that:

> Some of the most important things we look for in studio members as identified by the members themselves are:
>
> Importance of studio to artistic practice
>
> Time in studio
>
> Quality of practice
>
> Willingness to take part in community activities
>
> Willingness to take active role in shaping activities that happen within the space
>
> (Membership Application Process: NewBridge Studios Website Accessed 15.10.2017)

Space Six, in Commercial Union House organised their memberships similarly, both responding to the caveat of 'time spent in the studio'. With rental prices so cheap (£10 per week on average) many residents used their studios on an ad-hoc basis, coming in one or two times a week, or using it as cheap storage space. In order to create this community membership was offered with the understanding that you would spend a reasonable amount of time in your studio. I could never pin down what amounted to a reasonable sum of time, but the consensus seemed to be that if you were in regularly, and took part in activities – if you *contributed* – that was acceptable.

For both organisations, memberships offered the opportunity to build a community of interest, invested in the assemblage, and continuation of this collection of disparate artists. Members delivered much needed financial and physical assistance – providing a stable source of revenue, and help building the walls that would soon shape their

own studio spaces. For the artists, membership provided a legitimising force – a form of accreditation without the high price tag of formal education. It gave them a 'voice' - the opportunity to shape both the material space of Norham House and both the programme and future direction of the organisation.

Both Studio and Associate Memberships provided the opportunity to work within the physical space of EPSB. Membership for both Studio and Associates was open to artists at any stage of their career, with a desire to be a part of a diverse and critically engaged community of creative practitioners. The shared workspace provided a collaborative environment where members (both studio and associates) could share ideas, discuss and develop new projects. Membership provided access to a support network of fellow practitioners and both training and mentoring through their Artist Development Programme, Practice Makes Practice. Through this, NewBridge created a wider based of membership that was not entirely dependent on the physical space. In summation, both memberships provide *access* – to equipment, space and networks that are usually place based. This notion of access was crucial – a means of gaining control after a series of evictions and derelictions.

## 5.4 Against Membership

This idea of membership was not shared wholly across the block. Conversely, Breeze Creatives in Bamburgh House provided a model based on revenue from studio rent. As ZA explained:

> "ZA: Well our charity is set up simply for the provision of affordable space in the city centre. It's not an artistic endeavour necessarily it's just a space."

(ZA_27042016_BH)

Their way of running Bamburgh House was less about specific membership and more about building a sustainable business model that could be replicated across physical locations. This is not to argue that they did not facilitate a collaborative, diverse workspace as in NewBridge. Rather Breeze Creatives organised their offer around low cost space in the city centre – rather than the assisted sense of 'belonging' that comes with membership. It was, according to ZA not an 'artistic endeavour' meaning the same organisational structure could, and has been, repeated outside of the creative industries.

These two contrasting notions of how EPSB should be organised are repeated throughout the empirical chapters. I continually found it fascinating that the same block of city centre space facilitated artistic practice based on two entirely separate models; one based on membership – the other on rental. Whilst their shared residency within interstitial space enmeshes them in the same physical and networked space their imaginaries, materialities and practices often clash within these manifold overlapping topologies.

## 5.5 On Being and Becoming a Resident

The result in adopting such an embedded form of ethnography was the ability to draw on my own experiences of being and becoming a resident. Experiencing space is often neglected in research as it forms the most essential, natural and therefore overlooked aspect of our existence. There is no other way to know the body, and by extension,

bodily experience without living in it as a whole – as both subject and object. My year in the field involved my own specific experiences of being and becoming a resident, and eventually member of EPSB. By offering up my experiences here, I aim to reflect on how it *felt* to enter, work within, and eventually leave the field.

I, like others, had learnt of EPSB and the varied organisations operating within it, during my time at university. One lecturer, keen to get us from within the workshop and out to see what was happening in the city, took us on a fieldtrip to what would become NewBridge Studios. Then, it still bore the shape of the shop it had been, with maroon tiles on the floor and metal display structures nailed into the walls. As a class, we worked to help pull down a stud wall. The excitement I felt at the opportunity the space presented was palpable. W. spoke of other artists on higher floors, working in their own spaces, able to come and go as they pleased. They, and only they, had the key to the door. A door that, to a passer-by, looked like the entrance to nothing – to nowhere. The remnants of an old office space at best. This was 2012. Over the next two years I stayed in their 'orbit', attending events, exhibitions and workshops. I continued to work as a freelance artist, so was well aware of the block's spreading development.

In October 2015, keen to start my fieldwork, I approached MI from Space Six. She agreed to let me base myself in their hub space for the duration. To do this, I would have to become an Associate Member of Space Six. This membership would allow me access to the building (Commercial Union House) and the floor, as well as the use of the communal hub and kitchen.


*Figure 18: The communal hub in Space Six, the table pushed back against the wall during an event*

Over the course of the year, I sat at the table in the middle of communal hub almost every day. By returning, I felt like I had carved out a small space of my own. As this excerpt from my fieldnotes describes:

> "Today I came into the space late. It was freezing, as it has been for the last two months. Up until now, I had been using the hub space as my unofficial home. As a 'member' but not a 'studio holder', I am entitled to use this space, and the tea and coffee in the kitchen, as well as a discount if I ever want to hire one of the sprung floor rehearsal rooms. The nature of this space means closed doors surround me."
>
> (Fieldnotes_02122016_CUH)

The 'communal' hub was not as communal as it first appeared, or was designed to be. The space, divided into studios to maximise rental income, meant the majority of work took place behind closed doors. There was a stark contrast between how I had imagined working in Space Six to be and the reality once inside. Before my fieldwork

I had a preconceived notion of what working in EPSB would be like. To be frank, I imagined bohemian freeness - spontaneous dancing, late night philosophy debates and intimate closeness. What I did not anticipate was the *mundanity* of it all. Cleaning the microwave of someone else's soup, stiffness from hours spent sitting, hunched over work. This routine was as much embedded and embodied as artistic practice. Artists' days are, as with most workers, filled with minutiae, meetings and (seemingly endless) paperwork. Art work is, after all, work.

Other residents of Space Six, used to my presence around the floor and the block, invited me to events or into their studios to show me their work. Time spent within the block signified my commitment to the community. As AP explained,

> "some just use this as storage. They rent a space, leave their things, and rarely come back. I don't mean that people should be here, for hours every day. But it would be nice to see them. They should be part of this community."
>
> (AP_13112015_CUH)

With this in mind, I spent every day working within the block over the course of six months. Then, dependent on other responsibilities I aimed to spend at least three days a week. This continued over the course of my year in the field. A timeline for a typical day involved an early start to be in the block before 9am. I would arrive, greet the doorman and sign in. There were two sign in sheets, one for residents and one for visitors. I remember feeling a great sense of pride when, after two months, the guard slipped across the sheet for residents.

Each day I would begin by answering Jorgenson's (1989) First Encounter Questions. This enabled me to keep a record of the sounds, smells and sometimes tastes of the

space, over time building a sensory map of EPSB. I answered these questions to begin every day in the field. The following is an excerpt recorded mid-way through my fieldwork:

> "What do you see?
>
> I am at a table in the centre of the room. The walls are covered in posters, lots are out of date but they keep them up because they're colourful. To my left is the Choir rehearsal room, to my right a small office. Behind me a wall of windows looking out over Pilgrim Street.
>
> What do you smell?
>
> Someone has been cooking soup in the kitchen. Although it's right at the end of the corridor, the whole floor has this vegetable smell. Layered underneath is the musty smell rising off the second-hand couch. I can smell the cold in the air.
>
> What do you hear?
>
> Someone in the rehearsal room is singing a Beatles song. They're receiving some encouragement from whoever is playing the piano.
>
> What do you taste?
>
> Burnt coffee
>
> What do you feel?
>
> Cold. My fingertips are frozen but I remembered to bring a jumper today."
>
> (Fieldnotes_01112015_CUH)

I found comfort in this everyday routine, marked by a period of reflection both at the start of each day and as I studied, or rewrote my fieldnotes by night. However, unlike many residents I did not have any of the pressures associated with making my passion pay. At Christmas, I received cards and a small package of flapjacks baked by a theatre maker. My continued presence had fostered familiarity, and even friendliness. I was a

collaborator and a co-conspirator. Part of a steering committee for the future of the block, but also a member of a choir.

*Figure 19: The Choir in Commercial Union House*

This multiplicity in roles I experienced illuminated varied aspects of lived experience with EPSB. I moved through the fieldwork from the peripheries to the core, inside to outside, and from an observer to member and also, I think, friend.

Leaving the block was hard. I found it difficult to separate myself from 'being there'. I felt torn away too soon – despite the impending demolition of Norham House and the old Odeon. This demolition meant my own feelings of departure, of things ending, was mirrored through Norham House. However, my own despair was not wholly shared– as AG explained, "I'm aware that this space is makeshift so let's keep it makeshift and make-shift it somewhere else" (AG_24022016_CUH).

Whilst my experience is one among many, it re-iterates some salient points regarding the experience of those who, like myself, were pulled into EPSB's orbit through work.

Firstly, whilst free-lance work offers freedom, it also encompasses a great deal of solitude and introspection. Opportunities for connection – for being alone, together – come through incremental engagement with wider systems. As MI outlined, "In this building it's all about the networks. It's who you know" (MI_01022016_CUH).

## 5.6 Artistic Practice

Whilst Davidson and Milligan's emotio-spatial hermeneutic (2004), recognises that emotions are understandable - 'sensible' - only in the context of particular places, I hoped that such an embedded form of ethnography would re-create this particular spatial moment on the page. I hoped to add to an emotional landscape of EPSB that can be mapped on to the material. In this, it provides a particular perspective on crossing the threshold between inside/outside, not a member/member. Similar to my experience in the field, I want to use my own experiences as a gateway to explore the varied practices of artists within EPSB.

In exploring artistic practice, it raises the problem in defining both the space (as in Chapter 4 and 6 respectively) and the sector. SIC codes continually neglect freelancers and those that register as 'other'. In doing so these artists slip through the cracks in any creative industries mapping exercise. Additionally, I want to respond to research commissioned by A-N (2017) that described how, "the prevailing conditions of the creative industries are more conducive to workers under 35, and present inherent

disadvantages to those from ethnic minority groups and for disabled people, as well as for women with, or wishing to take on, family responsibilities" (A-N 2017:20). The borders of EPSB bind this research. Therefore, it would be overzealous to argue wholly against these findings. However, I want to use this research to create a more nuanced view of artistic practice within these interstitial environments.

My fieldwork revealed a diversity of practice I had not anticipated. In 12 months working within EPSB, I encountered:

> Theatre Makers Actors Puppeteers Fashion Designers Printmakers Graphic Designers Performance Artists Carpenters Sound Artists Festival & Events Organisers Visual Artists Dancers Singers Painters Researchers Script Writers Poets Taxidermists Activists Music Teachers Book Sellers Cartoonists Sculptors Musicians Choreographers Videographers Authors Storytellers Mimes Producers Actors Curators Photographers Sculptors Fashion Designers Potters

This list is not exhaustive. The fluidity of the spaces, with residents moving in and out constantly, meant that even though I worked across the block for 12 months I never felt as if I had a full grasp of the scale of activity across the block. Any extended period away from the field meant a certain level of uncertainty and anticipation over certain shifts and changes.

One notable aspect about this diversity of practice was that its inability to facilitate neat categorisation. Practice, like the place was porous. Affordability had opened up the block to an artistic practice that was playful, experimental. The old buildings house new organisations, providing incubators for new or emerging artists, as well as older organisations recouping after losing funding. Residents practice ways of organising, coalescing for project work and dissipating. They would work alone, picking up free-lance work or building their own practice. Alternatively, they would form part of larger

(though still in definitional terms ‘micro’) organisations. Yet residents would not stick to one practice; they shifted to take advantage of opportunities. Practice in EPSB was multiplicitous and fluid, disrupting the trajectory of a ‘traditional’ artistic career. A career which involved producing work, before being picked up by an agent and then shown in a gallery with the hope of selling enough work to sustain yourself. They are something in-between, working outside of typical career trajectories where an artist trains, produces work, gets noticed, gets representation, and gets exhibited. These artist-run interstitial spaces disrupt traditional trajectories. They are always in-between, always interstitial.

Working within EPSB had no a priori order relation, or hierarchical structure. Indeed, participating, for many residents, represented an opportunity to deconstruct normative ideas about artistic labour, and what it is to ‘be’ an artist, a builder, a citizen. It was a chance to look inwards, and decide on their own functions. A more engaged, and engaging method of producing low cost space. A response to KH’s assertion that, as artists, “We have lost the ability to use our hands” (KH_06042016_CS).

The diversity of practice emphasises the problem with combining everything under the title ‘creative quarter’. Overarching terms like creative or cultural underplay the nuance and multiplicity the buildings contain. They are homogenous and easily replicable. By designating EPSB as a creative quarter, residents tied themselves in with other quarters, occluding the differences that are tied to its position in time and space. Terms like creative and cultural promote the general to the detriment of the

particular. These designations do not make space for the diverse and nuanced practice that interstitial space engenders.

Additionally, the ability of art to represent, not just the internal life of the artist, but also reflect on the wider environment, its possibilities and constraints is undoubtable. However, concerning EPSB there was no seamless, coherent identity or single sense of place to be reflected. EPSB was a source of community, of conflict, of both. This points to a wider subject of oversimplification; defining artists as micro businesses or creative entrepreneurs hides a rich and varied ecology and occludes the particular challenges of artistic labour. For NQ, these labels worried that it reduced her practice, that the focus on economic outputs meant that "what we're doing is then 'just business'" (NQ_06042016_CUH).

I want to move away from the idea that the residents of EPSB are 'unruly kids' (Hudson 2017). These multiple, fluid and complex identities shifted continuously. The residents of EPSB were not just young, early career, or recently graduated artists. As CG, explained, NewBridge is for artists at "any stage of their career" (CG_27042016_NH) - career 'stage' is not necessarily indicative of an individual's age. UA had begun her practice later in life after being told that she first had to get a 'proper job'. Now in her mid-40's she has seized the opportunity to rent a small studio. When I told her how residents in EPSB had been described as unruly kids she flinched, "We're not kids. We're professional artists" (UA_031016_NH).

Whilst residents worked as professional artists, it is interesting again to note that EPSB facilitated an artistic practice that exists 'interstitially' between traditional art markets and formal economies and an informality that trades knowledge, skills, alongside physical artworks amongst a global network of AROs. This interstitiality means the artist is held in tension. Shifting, fluid spaces make diverse demands on the artist, leading to a shifting, fluid form of artistic practice. MI explained how working between the block she changed personas due to portfolio work, exclaiming that at any one point "I'm here, but I'm also out there" (MI_06122015_CUH).

Portfolio work was one the many ways residents supported themselves financially alongside their artistic practice and any funding they received. Some taught – a city with two universities always provided opportunities. Some worked part time in coffee shops or the larger galleries and museums in the city. Some sold clothes on EBay. In EPSB, you were never just an artist. As my field notes explained:

> You are not just an artist here. Today ZA told me about a performance artist working in Bamburgh House. She can't afford to rent a space so trades cleaning the toilets for a free studio to continue her practice. Echoes of a day spent with CG, how we spent it sending emails, painting walls, fixing the light in the gallery.
>
> (Fieldnotes_27042016_BH)

My fieldwork responded to the 'fracturing of artistic identity' outlined in the literature (Bain & McLean, 2013; Bridgstock, 2011; Haukka, 2011; McRobbie, 2004b; Mietzner & Kamprath, 2013). Whilst EPSB as a space of artistic production supports a diverse form of practice, it makes demands of its residents – favouring breadth over depth and the ability to work across collaboratively across disciplines.

## 5.7 Physical Artworks

Identities are shaped, reflected and represented through art. Artistic practice is often an identity making process: the object, the artwork, can be a direct or indirect embodiment of experiences, emotions, framed within broader cultural contexts. Nonetheless, regarding physical artworks as entirely emblematic of spatial characteristics is problematic. Firstly, the networked state of the galleries means the majority of work that is produced in the spaces is not displayed in them but transported on a global scale. Furthermore, whilst we consider art to be an embodied practice so necessarily requires some consideration of both the body and where the body is situated, it neglects the creative capacity of the artist to imagine: to remove themselves from their immediate surroundings. However, I argue, work always contains an echo or a resonance of their surroundings. This 'echo' of the interstitial was evident in the desire to make, or curate work that was experimental, or exploratory, cementing the interstitial as an incubator for emerging artists. The interstitial engendered a specific form of artistic practice that is networked, collaborative, reactive, short term and event-led.

## 5.8 Networked Practice

A year in the field uncovered working relationships between artists across the North East, extending out nationally to London, Bristol, Glasgow and internationally, to the USA, China, Europe and the Middle East. Whilst their physical bodies remain within EPSB, their working relationships, inspiration and practice travel globally. These spaces and their residents form connections with other artists globally.

My findings were dissimilar to Swords and Wray's (2010) exploration of North East based artists, which revealed a regionally bound set of engagement practices. They argue that artists remained, "isolated cognitively and physically from the critical mass of CCI's [cultural and creative industries] based in London" (Swords and Wray 2010:315). Those with 'increased connectivity' that engaged with creative industries contacts in London overcome this physical distance with "phone, email, blogging, and attending industry festivals or key events in the creative calendar." (Swords and Wray 2010:314). This form of practice revolves around the notion that to be able to work as an artist in the North East you must have first gone out and established a network of contacts to support your relocation to the peripheries, or the wilds of the North. This reinforces the idea that artistic innovation is something that is located solely in London and the Home Counties and must be sourced and shipped back. Then, and only then, imbued with cultural capital, can one practice in the North East.

Rather than something that is imported into the city, my fieldwork revealed a practice that was created *within* the city, and in some instances within the block. AP is originally from Guildford. He moved to the city to study at Northumbria University. After graduating, he stayed in Newcastle, working across the city creating theatre pieces. CG moved north to study at Newcastle University and continued to practice within the city before joining NewBridge Studios in 2011. Others, such as MI, WS and AG were born in the North East, and developed their practice within the city. These stories were repeated throughout my time in EPSB, often with a sense of civic pride. By continuing to live and work within the North East that they were, in some

small sense, redressing the balance between London and 'the regions' (as Arts Council England continues to call anywhere beyond the barrier of the M25).

Perhaps Swords and Wray's findings were a result of the time of writing. In 2010, EPSB was in its infancy. Norham House had only just been taken over and Commercial Union House was still unoccupied. It had not developed the 'critical mass' – the gravitational pull that kept artists within it and drew artists from outside. MI's exclamation that, "I'm here, but I'm also out there" (MI_06122015_CUH) referenced how practicing within EPSB held her in tension between the local and the global.

This idea of a linear practice where an artist moves from the North East, develops their work, and then returns to the North East because of the lure of cheaper housing, familial connections is reductive. As is the idea of an artist who, moving to Newcastle for study, stays to practice. Instead, my fieldwork revealed a networked practice that was fluid. As AG said,

> "I think that if these buildings don't survive then the networks will. The connections we've made here will outlast the buildings"
>
> (AG_26042016_CUH)

On first reading it appears as if the buildings themselves were insignificant in the face of a networked artistic practice. I would argue, however, that without the physical block, artists from such diverse practices would not have come together. EPSB was and is a node – a point of connection or intersection within a wider network. Residents

therefore formed a network and are networked. This network, formed as it was by the urban fabric of Newcastle at that time, was thoroughly embedded in the city.

## 5.9 Collaborative Practice

For residents, EPSB remained an everyday site of adaptation, and improvement, co-operation and connection. Collaborative practice and the ability to form a community of interest remained crucial for the residents of EPSB. Indeed, at times EPSB appeared less about art and more about this sense of community. As CG explained:

> "it's about creating this community of artists. So, in the application process we still ask for bio, cv, what you do, statement of work so what work you do but also a statement on why you want to be a part of the NewBridge Project.
>
> (CG_27022016_NH)

Across the block residents planned and executed the creation of a hub space for communal use. To go back to CG, she mentioned,

> "We call it a membership to the NewBridge Project, and it's about…it's about creating, it's about being a member of this community, of this network."
>
> (CG_25042016_NH)

CG refers to NewBridge, not as an organisation or initiative but as a 'community' and a 'network'. This came up in conversation across EPSB, with residents sharing their desire to become part of something larger than themselves. For CG, community naturally formed into the membership programme described beforehand. Membership was a means to solidify the shifting users of the space into something more concrete. Indeed, membership by its nature *feels* different - it conveys accountability to members provides demonstrable benefits and engages them around a common cause.

To clarify, when I talk here of 'community' I refer to a community of practitioners working within EPSB. Whilst there have been attempts, by both residents and academics, to map the tendrils that extend out of the block and connect EPSB to a wider 'community' of practitioners; service users, funders or friends, this was outside the remit of this research. Whilst locating EPSB within a wider urban context is important – no space exists separately from its surroundings - concerning this research, I was more interested in the dynamics *within* the block. That is, the interstitial is a relational space that is formed, and therefore belongs to those who engage and participate. Additionally, the difficulty when considering the word 'community' in regard to artistic practice is attempting to negotiate the old argument of art as ameliorative for meaningful social change. When I speak of community I do not refer to the specific form of community art that is characterised by interaction with people who may not otherwise engage with the arts. The way in which EPSB represents, as Bain & McLean (2013) write, "cultural social services", was outside the scope of this research.

Practicing within EPSB was an act of commoning on the part of the residents: water, electricity, food, and the hub spaces themselves were all held in common for the benefit of all. Bills were divided communally, or included in studio rent. Whilst community is often seen as an affirmative term rather than a pejorative one, implying a sense of cooperation and teamwork, it can also be ill defined and simplistic, only successful in maintaining a veneer of harmony. I do not aim to maintain a view that artistic practice within EPSB was wholly harmonious, thereby occluding the particular

tensions that residency produced. However, I want to draw attention to the collaborative form of practice that this community engendered. This collaborative practice extended from amenities within the space to events that involved organisations block wide. In summer 2016, the first Block Party exemplified this collectivistic outlook. Both individuals and organisations in each building opened their doors for a night of music, performance and exhibition. What differed in this event, as opposed to the annual Late Shows, was its focus on joining the block, celebrating the diversity of practice. As NQ explained, "what we're good at as a sector is celebrating" (NQ_18042016_CUH). The Block Party was a celebration, but it was also a signifier, a demonstration of collective power and continued presence in the heart of the city.

## 5.10 Short term practice

Arts Council England's (2004) Taste Buds Report stated, "art is like no other commodity in that the ultimate desired resting place for an artwork is within a public collection. The dynamic within a large part of the arts sector is the aspiration, by artists and their intermediaries, for their art to attain a place in museum or gallery collections" (ACE 2004:4). My findings counter this, in that the residents of EPSB appeared to assent to their temporariness, producing work that addressed their impermanence in creative ways. In this, they strained against this traditional trajectory, shifting to an artistic value system that did not wholly idealise transience, but did demonstrate some form of acceptance. As my field notes expounded:

> "Friday night. Another block wide event where each building opens its doors. There have been several over the course of the year, each building in scale and excitement. The atmosphere is intense. Bodies rush between the buildings. A PA system needs to be borrowed from around the corner, pieces need to be hung. Whilst it has the appearance of open studios I have attended in the past, those events had been an opportunity for artists to sell work. Each studio decorated with objects to hold and buy, all neatly aligned and priced up. These

> seem to be something different. Nothing seems to be for sale. They're all free to access. They seem to be celebratory. I found five minutes with AG to ask why the events are like this. She said (something to this effect) "We need to get people in whilst we're here. To see us, to see our work before the lease is up. This space is shifting, so let's shift it somewhere else. But we're here now."
>
> Fieldnotes 13052016

The residents addressed this uncontrollable impermanence through hosting events where impermanence was their major feature. It was the symbolic power of their physical presence in the city centre that was important, not the physical art works. This was especially important, as the majority of artistic activity had been increasingly pushed out of the urban core towards the margins of the city over the past year. Newcastle city centre was now for students or the behemoth institutions of the Sage or Baltic whilst new or emerging artists were pushed to studio spaces in the suburbs. On these nights, East Pilgrim Street became a hybrid space - the connective tissue between the production and the consumption of art, the local and the global. Whilst there remains a relentless drive for regeneration, the interstitial is a pause, it is a celebration of the moment, celebrating that the residents are, however fleetingly, 'present' in the city.

## 5.11 Care as a form of artistic practice: the mundane everyday

The idea that the buildings were 'only temporary' produced the space to resist normative ideas about what an artist's studio should look like or be situated. As Benjamin (1999) maintains, "to dwell means to leave traces" (Benjamin 1999:24). A dwelling process therefore means "the traces of the inhabitant are imprinted in the interior" (ibid). The aim of this thesis was to explore the dialectic relationship between

artists and urban space. Whilst the previous chapter outlined how residents formed space, I now extend this exploration of how the space forms practice by contending that the care and maintenance of the material space was a form of artistic expression.

Anish Kapoor argues that the built environment is a reflection, or substitution for the self, a surrogate body (Kapoor 2001). To create space is therefore a form of self-expression in spatial terms. For artists, grounded by tradition, this self-image was recognisable; stable (Bain 2005, Wittkower and Wittkower 2006). However, I argue this image of self has become fluid, subject to shift and flux. The space of EPSB was therefore a tool of expression, and an extension of this fluidity. CG reflected in this:

> "this space is for all of our studio members and artists. And what we have done to the spaces is I mean especially here…it's very ad hoc like, I don't know if you've been to the higher floors and the studios …when they used to be open plan and over the years we've gradually built temporary walls, stud walls. But they've all been built with the different artists so they all look different, they're all individual, they used different materials ummm perhaps what was lying around at that time, what was left over an exhibition and got taken up there."
>
> (CG_25042016_NH)

The hybridisation of artistic identity creates a hybrid space, formed from the leftovers of artistic practice. The incremental additions to EPSB acted against orthodox development's "incessant appeals to the future" (NEOutopia 2012:605) by realising the joy in temporality – the idea that engagement is finite. There was a distinct temporal difference between the pace of art-making and the pace of space-making within EPSB. The ephemeral nature of the spaces produced a frenetic energy and pace to the work, the idea that it must be done now or not at all. Yet, everyday activity within EPSB is mundane, almost janitorial. Together we cleaned plates and fixed plugs. This cumulative process of cleaning, building and making led to a great deal of emotional investment in the continued maintenance of the physical structure of EPSB.

I saw this as an *aesthetics of care* - the emotional investment of residents leaving visible traces throughout the block.

The decorations stood as a particular feature of the emotional investment of residents, bringing our attention to the everyday lived experience with EPSB. The following image is one of the many walls papered with magazine cuttings and event posters.

*Figure 20: Studio Decoration*

Whilst the physical footprint of EPSB remained immutable, the decorations were a means for the residents to leave traces, to provide physical evidence of their presence. These items, torn from magazines, or taken from exhibitions had a particular significance only when pasted onto the wall. As Johnstone (2008) contended, they revealed the everyday without qualifying it as anything but the common ground of

experience. In this instance, the decorations stood as testament to an enduring investment and sense of connection to place. As CG explained,

> I mean although we've invested time, I feel like what we've done is a response to the temporary nature of the building…knowing that we're not going to have it forever and so we've responded by creating temporary interventions in the building. And that is actually part of the lease, you're not meant to change …everything you do is meant to be returnable."
>
> (CG_14102016_NH)

These tiny incremental additions to the material space of EPSB were, in some instances, the largest additions residents were able to make. Alternatively, they were the largest they were *willing* to make, considering the concreted floors and new gallery walls would need to be ripped out before the space was returned to the property owner.

Whilst the residents considered themselves mostly professional artists they all see themselves as amateur architects, attempting to (often clumsily) close the gap between their own needs and the conceived space of EPSB. Incremental additions make the space usable for art making, for example on the top floor of Norham House one resident pitched a tent. The movable, temporary structure of the tent allowed him to work in private without the need for walls, working against the (often) impractical physical attributes of EPSB.

That is not to say that the physical attributes of EPSB were not beneficial to artistic practice - we described earlier how the physical buildings provided foci for the networked practice. Rather, the physical was as much something to be contended with as it was an asset. Everyday embodied acts of fixing; decorating, emailing and cleaning became more important than the embodied act of art making. However, communally

building the studio spaces offered rhythm, routine and a sense of agency that addressed the precarious, frustrating and often challenging nature of operating in East Pilgrim Street. The interstitial allows artists to make and remake urban space through tiny acts of fixing, decorating, and emailing. In this way art as a verb (to do art) involves a lot less to do with 'art' the physical product itself.

## 5.12 From artist to manager

I have argued that EPSB was and remains a node for multiple diverse artistic practices. The low cost, accessible and, importantly, visible space engendered a level of artistic activity previously unseen in the city centre. Nonetheless, this aesthetics of care directly affected certain residents' ability to practice as artists. CG expanded on this:

> "INT: How has it affected you taking on this building? You said, ummm, you said you trained in visual arts? Do you still practice?
>
> CG: Ummm, no. Well no, I don't make arts objects I guess but I do kind of see it as a living artwork in a way. Like it is supporting so many artists to be able to make their work, ummm and I guess so much provision in cultural activity does kind of feed my you know, creativity.
>
> INT: Yeah, it must be a really creative position to manage this kind of building.
>
> CG: Yeah, it is like very wide reaching the role. It isn't just sitting here doing fund raising applications, it is like you know, unblocking the toilet when it needs doing…when no one else is there. So it is everything from managing the building, the lease you know, all of the boring things like utilities to fundraising, to partnerships…to managing this space but also programming the gallery and our events program"
>
> (CG_250216_NH).

CG had trained in Visual Art but now had little time, or creative energy to produce work. Instead, spaces are her artwork, curated and designed, and caring for those

spaces a form of artistic practice. The diversity of the role in this quote is interesting, taking the focus away from the physical act of art making itself. The responsibility of managing the block removes certain residents from being able to practice as artists. *Which* residents were unable to practice was concisely summed up by NQ. Despite the plans for a communal, collaborative space at the outset, she stressed that:

"The problem here is that someone has to run it."

(NQ_16112015_CUH)

Interstitial space is a space of transformation, from one state of being to another – from an artist to a manager. This 'problem' was shared around the block. In Bamburgh House the same question, regarding artistic practice, was met with a similar response.

"INT: so you were both practicing?

AB: I was, I'm not now.

DG: I'm not anymore."

(ABDG_270416_BH)

Again, in CUH PS re-iterated the subtle shift from being a practitioner to a 'property manager'.

"INT: so you've become…you're practitioners?

PS: No, not any more. We've crossed over.

INT: So you're more about the gallery space…and now, you're kind of property management? In a way?

PS: I understand that. I mean the idea is that each floor being managed by a different organisation, each person managing their own floor but this …I mean it's sort of easier like this. I mean if a plug isn't working on the third floor you need to go to someone from B&D and say this plug isn't working. What might happen is we might go on to the third floor and see a plug hanging off the wall and say, actually we need to get that fixed. We command you to get that fixed.

> Ummm, well we have to get an electrician in…and they have to pay for it. Ummm, six and two threes"
>
> (PS_240216_CUH)

Reactive perhaps to the difficulties of self-management, as the space evolved over time the responsibility for maintaining the building became less of a communal endeavour. In order to sustain the artistic practice of residents, certain residents became managers. There were no elections, the process occurred through a form of self-selection. Why some residents and not others came down to serendipity (right place, right time, right skills) and, for some, a realisation that the continuation of the block was more important than their own artistic practice. Indeed, PS's description of how repairs to the building are organised - the residents 'command' and he obeys – would suggest that, from his perspective, the relationship is not as hierarchical as it first appears. For PS, EPSB provided the opportunity to deconstruct structural power relationships, facilitating a streamlined organisational structure that ensured the majority of residents could focus on art-making.

This collective, careful practice, with an emphasis on membership and belonging led to an unexpected feeling in EPSB, that of *responsibility*. Residents felt a sense of responsibility for sustaining the space, maintaining its ability to support artistic practice. This involved the physical activity of building, cleaning, fixing but also ensuring their financial sustainability. As before, artmaking involves a lot less to do with 'art' the physical product itself.

I spoke earlier of a contrast between organisational models within the same block of city centre space; one based on rental income supplemented by indirect patronage and public funding and the other solely from rental income, independent from traditional

arts funding models. Those receiving funding felt an incredible sense of responsibility to their residents, and to the city, as a result. As ZA outlined:

> "ZA: Public resources…that's our responsibility I think. If you take a building this big from the city and take those rates and cutbacks and kickbacks then you should take the responsibility of managing yourself like a business in order for that to work. If you can provide three jobs from that for artists to work in the sector then you've bought that retention and regeneration to the city"
>
> (ZA_27042016_BH).

This excerpt is ideal in outlining the varied forms of investment the residents that drive this sense of responsibility. As ZA highlights, in combination Newcastle City Council and the property owners provide a form of capital investment, investing in the block through the lease of capital assets as well as fixed assets tied to the physical structure of the building. I described earlier how receiving funding from large institutions left ZA feeling as though she had her 'hands tied'. Art making for ZA is a business and therefore should be recognisable as such, approached as any other capitalistic enterprise (Kelly 1974). Yet with further exploration, ZA's organisation is not quite the entrepreneurial endeavour it first appeared.

Despite being 'against' traditional forms of arts funding from the Arts Council, Bamburgh continues to operate thanks to reduced rates and kickbacks as a form of in-kind funding. Consequently, I would argue that this positioning for or against funding, and the way in which it facilitated two contrasting approaches to artistic practice in interstitial space, was more of an ideological conflict rather than an actual approach to sustainable practice.

This argument illuminates why both sides felt this overwhelming responsibility towards the council, property owners and to the city itself. Indeed, at times it felt less like responsibility and more an obligation to provide tangible benefits in reward for

their continued support. The residents of EPSB have been "co-opted into the development agenda" (Zukin 1995:22) through their desire for financial sustainability.

## 5.13 Artistic Audiences in EPSB

In addition to financial sustainability, residents felt a responsibility to engage with, and sustain a diverse audience. Indeed, when considering spaces of art making we must also consider those who are consuming the art that is being made. Art is a reciprocal relationship – any work of art is 'half a conversation between two human beings' (Vonnegut 1998:168-169). There is a fluid relationship between the art and the audience; therefore, any consideration of artistic practice must also consider whom the residents of EPSB are making art for. The material space of EPSB affects not just the art but also the audience. As AP explained:

> "AP: I think the thing that's affected it most is the audience ummm and the way the audience has changed for us. What we thought we'd be able to do it bring them all to this space and it was a completely different thing. Because people get scared of the word theatre and it's got it outside and above it, and we're only small and hidden away so people say nah, I don't like theatre; I don't like poetry and that. But we're changing the way they are seeing work. Instead of, before they wouldn't go to the central pub, or they wouldn't go to the Dog and Parrot or the Bridge Hotel. Now they're actually going, these are the places where the most exciting work's beginning to get made because those are the spaces where you can take the risks so you can take the risk as an audience member and say, well I don't mind spending five to eight quid, or pay what you want"
>
> (AP_200116_NH).

AP raised an interesting point about the ability of the interstitial to reframe artistic consumption. He contended that, by designating EPSB as an 'art space' away from the traditional white box gallery he had developed a new audience. The informality of the material space, the low cost of the performances and therefore the accessibility of

his shows encouraged audiences looking to explore. Indeed, EPSB provided the opportunity to explore how different audiences come together. Audiences remain important to funders as a key indicator of the success of an exhibition or performance, yet audiences are difficult to quantify. We can capture the amount of bodies through a doorway, but it is hard to capture a catch in the throat, or a quickening pulse.


*Figure 21: Event at NewBridge Studios. Photo Credit Kuba Ryniewicz*

This was not a singular 'audience' for the entire block. Rather, different audiences attended different events. It was never a space of retreat, like a white box gallery that invites separation and contemplation but is removed from the everyday. The audience bridge the gap between the mental and the material spaces of EPSB, bleeding out onto the street. They project their own wants and desires onto the space, re-making it every time they visit. The exhibition opening takes on new significance in this environment. Food and drink are laid out, with plenty of alcohol. It felt electric to be a part of it, like looking out from the centre of a tornado. When you enter you become part of the

performance, part of the piece, part of the space. EPSB blurs the line between audience and artist, the interstitial space acting as a performative space. Indeed, many of these nights were about performing, or projecting a certain lifestyle that differs in actuality from life that is lived.

This performance was no more apparent than in the picturing of EPSB through brochures, leaflets and event posters. Consider these images taken from a poster for a block-wide open studio event:

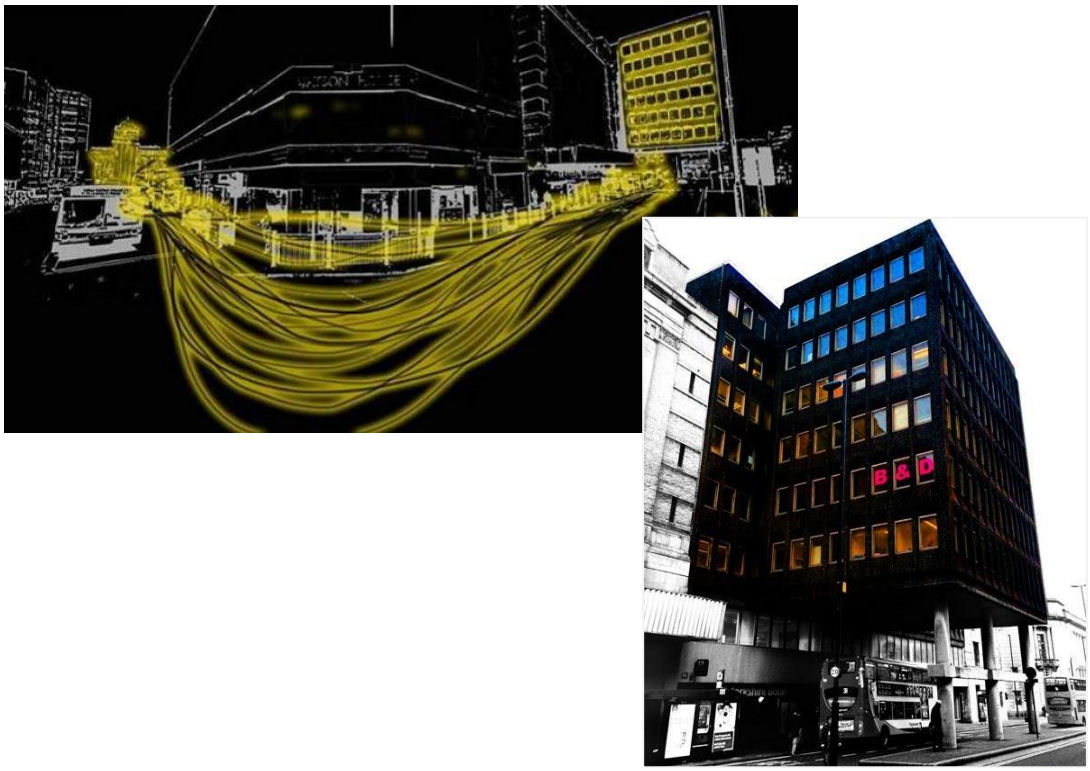


*Figure 22: Event poster from the MicroLates*

The interstitial is the connecting tissue between the bohemian freeness pictured and the space in actuality. I found the event images ideal for demonstrating the gap between representations of space and representational, lived space (Lefebvre 1991b). Spatial characteristics are, for these residents, indicative of a wider ethos; these images formed a discursive strategy of distancing themselves from other venues in the city.

Encouraging a suspension of disbelief between the representations and the representational, residents of EPSB map the performative space of all night events, exhibitions and openings onto the old brutalist buildings.

I find these images particularly important for the way they frame artistic practice within EPSB. After all, artists practicing within the block designed these images. Therefore, they provide a tangible illustration of how these residents identify the block and by extension themselves. Indeed, a key finding of this thesis is the way in which EPSB represented an opportunity to deconstruct normative ideas about artistic labour, and what it is to 'be' an artist, a builder, a citizen. Framed by policy makers as ideal entrepreneurs and by property owners as interim tenants, collecting these images as part of my fieldwork was an opportunity to explore how artists frame themselves. They are practitioners, builders, property developers, regeneration experts. They perform and are also performative.

## 5.14 Normalising precarity

The difficulty with this shifting identity is that being an artist means engaging with a particular lifestyle or ethos as much as physically producing work. Whilst Florida (2002) and Brooks (2000) argue that this bohemian ethos is combined with the economic capital to support it. Indeed, there remains a sense in these earlier publications that these are people who can afford to live precariously; middle class, with familial financial support. I found this was just one descriptor in a myriad of manoeuvres that supported continued practice. An informal network of property owners, partners, parents and peers (with the rise of Crowdfunding) support artistic

practice. I want to argue against the romanticisation of these spaces as utopian ideal. Rather finances were dependent on current projects, the time of year, and the success (or not) of applications for funding.

However, whilst the sensory and embodied aspects of art making have been explored (Merleau-Ponty 1964) there has been little research in understanding how this is affected by an increasingly precarious lifeworld. Indeed, Creative City literature is notable for its lack of sensory, bodily affect. In suggesting solutions for regenerated and revived cities, the literature is characterised largely by disembodied research absent of the thoughts, beliefs, and desires of actual citizens. In remaining attentive to HP, this research attempts to illuminate the 'small' or minute actions of EPSB residents as they go about producing space for art production. In this, its focus remains on the "triality of timing, the body, and the event" (Dewsbury 2000:475). I want to detail further how the act of art making within EPSB is both linked to, and influenced, by an inherent precariousness.

In regards to EPSB, it is more useful to consider precariousness in Butler's (2006) terms as an ontological condition. That is not to argue that precariousness is not an endemic problem within the creative and cultural sectors. Unpaid work, freelancing, short-term temporary contracts, and apprenticeships amongst others add to an ecology that is at best fluid, and at worst insecure. This is exacerbated by unpaid labour for oneself, including time spent on portfolio or project development as well as networking. However, I want to make the distinction between precariousness and the Precariat. The Precariat as defined by Standing (2011) are a distinct social class consisting of those who feel their lives and identities are made up of disjointed bits, in

which they cannot construct a desirable narrative or build a career, combining forms of work and labour, play and leisure in a sustainable way" (Standing 2011). Framing artists as part of this Precariat encourages a misunderstanding of their own agency.

As Standing (2011) outlined, being part of the Precariat implies a person "dependent on circumstances beyond one's control: uncertain, unstable, insecure" (Kresal 2011:2). Control is an important word here. I do not argue that wider environmental factors (lack of low cost space in the city for example) do not affect residency in short-term, underused urban space. However, what is lacking in conversations about precarity is a considered appreciation of individual agency. Precariousness as both a term and a class does not appreciate the nuance of the situation – or the individuals' role in choosing. Indeed, precariousness is relative: the residents I encountered had more agency than a relocated factory worker for example. Whilst I do not wholly think it is useful, or helpful to compare artists to these workers in a zero-sum game towards desperation this comparison raises some valid points. For the residents of EPSB, their precariousness was understood and accepted from the beginning; they make that decision and own that choice – they are in no way victims. Indeed, as explored earlier forming critical mass made residents of EPSB feel unusually powerful in their conversations with policymakers, and property owners.

Additionally, framing artists as part of the Precariat is drawn from a misunderstanding of the social production of artistic practice. Standing writes, "the Precariat cannot draw on social memory, a feeling of belonging to a community of pride, status, ethics and solidarity. Everything is fleeting" (Standing 2011). However, as my findings demonstrate, the residents of EPSB have a distinct sense of community and belonging. Therefore, while the experience of working within EPSB was always situated and

temporal, residents were able to draw on a shared past and set of memories developed through a contingent process of engagement with the community. This dwelling process creates a time and space in the present that is informed by this 'historicity' – knowledge we have developed through past experience.

This community reproduces certain notions around pay and lifestyles. Indeed, surrounded by artists with similar incomes the space becomes an echo chamber. When financial reward is not forthcoming, EPSB socializes artists to seek non-financial rewards – peer recognition and personal satisfaction for example. Encouraged by narrow social networks, this homogenisation of the sector reinforces the idea that low pay is both acceptable and to be expected. Precariousness is therefore socially reproduced and socially accepted. It is part of the deal. Indeed, the tough, difficult parts of the job had a currency, to be traded between each other to determine who had it worst.

The logical question to ask would be, why continue if this way of working had such an impact on their lives? Yet for certain residents of EPSB their work is the core of their identity. This identity is hard to untangle from when their whole sense of self is enmeshed within it. As MI outlined, "When I'm away from work I don't know what to do. Who am I?" (MI_17012016_CUH). The romantic appeal of the starving artist remains due to general acceptance and expectation. In this respect, I argue that precariousness in the arts is structural. It has become engrained in the everyday. This is problematic if we consider those for whom this precarious lifestyle makes artistic practice unachievable. Those with familial responsibilities, those from BAME backgrounds, working class artists and women.

Conversely to Bain & McLean (2013) I contend that the residents of EPSB are not the Precariat, but they are in often precarious circumstances. That it is a choice does in no way limit the actual bodily affect of working within these precarious circumstances. Indeed, the main issue with explorations of artistic identity is their tendency to romanticise, or normalise a life that involves hardship. EPSB, residents are subjected to manifold pressures through the process of building, creating and working in these interstitial spaces. Indeed, spending a year of my fieldwork working from EPSB involved negotiating wild fluctuations in temperature (the majority were not heated), disruptions in the power service and nefarious building practices from prior occupants. Through this, the interstitial body is restricted; the space makes demands of the bodies the same way they make demands of the space. As KH commented, "warmth is very important when using your hands" (KH_02032016_C).

This interstitiality is a source of bodily harm. EPSB was a space of extremes, in temperature, food and rest. Rarely were you well rested and warm. This lack of warmth meant illness was common. From October to March, I had a permanent cold that lingered, clouding every experience. Indeed, being unwell formed part of the everyday experience of residents within EPSB. Being in the block with residents meant that I needed to reflect not just on my analysis of tactile experiences; the smell of burnt coffee or the feel of cold floors for example, but also on the feeling and emotion of being there with residents. As Geertz (1998) says, it is only because we have been *there* (in the field) that we can be *here* - reflecting and writing about our experiences. As explored in Chapter 3, emotion can be a rich source of data. The distance from Ouseburn to EPSB can be measured in a straight line that is no more than three miles yet, the emotional journey spans thirty years; from the first artists tearing down the

doors to Lime Street Factory and declaring that this was now theirs to the first wall demolished in Norham House. This journey will continue as residents move from EPSB. This is an emotional journey of imagination, transformation and negotiation driven by transience.

Negotiating transience personally means certain sacrifices. In February, M and I walked around Space Six, M using the time to relate parts of her life story as we tidied and re-arranged furniture. I found that often it was moments such as this that revealed thoughts and feelings that were otherwise hidden. The mundanity of the task at hand left a space for conversation that was open and honest. Concentration, so often flitting between tasks, paused for a brief moment allowing me to explore the embodied experience of working within the spaces, to observe space through MI's eyes. Walking and talking as we went, something tugged at her attention. The usual conversation about upcoming work turned to greater plans for the future. Three sentences stood out in this

> "Are we going to pay the rent?
>
> Do I have to work for free?
>
> Can I have a child?"
>
> (MI_2122015_CUH)

The overall feeling this interstitiality created was one of pressure, to create, to earn a living but also meet life's traditional milestones of marriage and children. During my fieldwork I did not explicitly collect data on the backgrounds, and familial status of the artists I encountered. Unless it was volunteered it felt invasive to ask, potentially risking the bonds that had formed and the sense of trust those bonds engendered.

Therefore, it is hard not to argue that practice within EPSB is more conducive to artists able to meet those demands. In this instance, it is hard to argue against AN's assertion that "the prevailing conditions of the creative industries are more conducive to workers under 35, and present inherent disadvantages to women with, or wishing to take on, family responsibilities" (A-N 2017:20).As KH argued:

> "most of the people are mid-career artists so they're my age…mid 40's. But they still are earning 10 grand a year from their practice if they're lucky. And they make it up by teching at the Baltic. Basically they're choosing a creative existence. They're choosing to give back to the world. It's not about money. I think my income this year will be 14 grand which when you're heading into your 40's, you know I'm committed to not earning much money but when you've got three kids and they want to go on school trips and I want to go on a holiday once in a while umm and there's things like pensions and you're like I can't keep doing this."
>
> (KH_29012016_CS)

This excerpt outlines the tension between familial responsibilities and artistic practice. Working as a freelance artist afforded certain freedoms, the ability to mould her schedule in such a way that she could be present for her children. The difficulty, however, arose from the sustainability of the arrangement. KH must simultaneously sustain her children and her practice whilst managing her children's expectations in line with their parent's income. The everyday for KH involved a continual tension between both freedom and responsibility, expectation (both hers and her children's) and reality.

# Chapter Six

# 6. Art vs Aesthetics

## 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed EPSB at an intimate scale, focusing on the minutia of everyday life, and work for residents. In doing so, I aimed to illuminate the lived experience of artists within interstitial space, exploring how these spaces form a distinct practice based on the short term, the networked, and the event-led. I finish the empirical work by drawing back to explore in greater depth how EPSB fits into wider narratives of urban regeneration. This chapter is concerned with the continuing relationship between artists (art) and urban regeneration (aesthetics). In this, the research adds detail to an understanding of culture-led regeneration that is, and includes, the corporeal enactment of art making contextualised within the particular stories and locations of Newcastle upon Tyne. Its aim is to unpack Vickery's (2007) assertion that;

> "A city or urban centre is not simply an agglomeration of different if interconnected buildings; it can always be 'read' as an articulation of urban policy…The city is a hierarchy of apportioned spaces, where the corridors of opened and closed access, continuity and disconuity, sudden changes in the quality of building materials speaks for the structure of social interaction. The aesthetic character of a city can express a confused identity or a state of intellectual ineptitude. An urban centre may be banal or mediocre, but these qualities speak in details about the knowledge base, intellectual investment and socio-cultural priorities of the locale."
>
> (Vickery 2007:75)

Interventions in urban space can never be seen as acts of tabula rasa. The city is a palimpsest – its surfaces 'speak' of investment and disinvestment, initiatives and

enterprise. Place and agency intertwine and recreate each other. By extension, the activities within one block of city space, within the boundaries of EPSB bear the traces of these shifting assemblages.

This chapter's title reflects the continuing tensions between the arts and wider economy explored in Chapter 2. In this, I described how regeneration strategies are increasingly designed to appeal to an aesthetic dimension. Drawing from Sennett (1977), I contend that the aestheticisation of everyday life has created a dialectic on the nature of artistic 'value'. Whilst the idea of artistic value remains within the enclosed world of the arts, the other has been adopted and applied in a socio-urban context. This new relationship between the arts and wider economy can be seen in the development and constant deification of the creative industries as a driver of economic development. Within Newcastle upon Tyne, Council members, developers and artists are held in tension by these spatial relationships.

Ethnography, in this instance, with its extended period of immersion in the field and long periods of introspection was ideal in exploring how the everyday of residents, their interactions with materials and space intertwine with wider policy agendas. With this, it aims to disrupt and extend our understanding of the Creative City, and culture-led regeneration.

Chapter 2 explored the interrelationship between culture and urban regeneration reproduced through the Creative City script. This narrative positions artists as drivers of economic development, able to stimulate the built environment and attract inward investment (Bianchini & Parkinson 1993; Paddison 1993; Florida 2002, 2005). This,

in turn, is utilised as a tool to promote and develop the creative industries through increased visibility and wider engagement. As the Creative Industries Council (2016) expounds:

> "it's not just a one-way street – when local government helps the creative sector, the creative sector helps the city in return by bringing new jobs and pride to local communities"
>
> (Creative Industries Council 2016:3).

In this instance, the Creative City script, and any regenerational efforts are framed as a reciprocal relationship between state and city, city and artist. Yet questions remain over the parity of this pact. The CIC would suggest that this relationship, this "marriage to conventional society" as Adler (2003:84) frames it, involves both equal contribution, and equal outcomes for both city and artist. Additionally, the quote suggests a bargain entered into willingly. Is this marriage as harmonious as the literature would suggest?

## 6.2 New Strategies of Urban Regeneration

Viewing the city as an 'articulation of urban policy" (Vickery 2007:75) the sixth floor of Commercial Union House provided the perfect vantage point to observe the multiple approaches to culture-led regeneration across Newcastle upon Tyne. The hub space on the sixth floor allowed me to draw back and see the city as a "meaningful emotional whole, as if at a glance, all at once" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008:6).

The Tyne River, responsible for the city's incredible economic growth, stretches just out of sight. Pressed against the window of the hub space we can make out the

quayside, where The Sage and Baltic Gallery stand, emblematic of a series of projects designed to revive the riverside as a place to live and work. Straight ahead, Grey Street, and a plan for regeneration that would emphasise conservation and repair, instead of demolition and replacement. The heritage-led regeneration of Grainger Town bought together Newcastle City Council, English Heritage and English Partnerships. £40 million of public sector investment was bolstered by £160 million from the private sector to improve the public realm, restore historic assets and create new city centre housing.

*Figure 23: View from Commercial Union House and Bamburgh House*

The space under our feet is equally embedded in this urban history. Commercial Union House forms part of the infamous Council Leader T Dan Smith's utopian regeneration plan that would be Newcastle re-imagined as "The Brasilia of the North". In the frenzy of demolition through the 1960's and 1970's vast swathes of the city centre were demolished for a concrete utopia fashioned by T Dan Smith. The remains of the Royal Arcade have been demolished and replaced with high modernism. Commercial Union House was built during this stage and now sits on the pinnacle between the two. To the left, the gently curved Georgian Grey Street. To the right, the brutalist tower of The Pearl.

A lack of capital funding has moved recent efforts from the idea of *physical* cultural regeneration towards the *experiential*. Newcastle's cultural offer is curated by NE1, the business improvement district. Their offer is centered on short-term consumption, with themed festivals (vegan food, gin for example) as well as Fashion Week and a Pop-up Cinema.

## 6.3 All of this has happened before: The Creative City is dead, long live the Creative City

Diverse moments, with diverse outcomes. This was not the first time the Creative City or culture-led regeneration had been utilised in Newcastle upon Tyne. Whilst I argue that the extent of artistic activity within one city block made EPSB a unique spatial moment the continued process of occupation and eviction was well known. For Heidegger (1927), whilst sense making is always situated and temporal, it is also framed by experience, or 'historicity'. For the residents of EPSB, practice was filled with the sense that, as one resident put it, "all this has happened before" (ME_28012016_HY).

Indeed, there are repetitions of the events that happened in Ouseburn Valley throughout the 1990's -2000's. I began my fieldwork in Ouseburn, yet in my first conversation I was told that in creative terms, "Ouseburn is dead" (SH_031015_LS). A dramatic statement: SH meant that, in spatial terms, the valley had become a highly managed, manicured 'cultural hub'. For him, that meant the loss of any inventive artistic practice. Ouseburn was now for the "middle class, you know, the designers

and makers with a clientele who pay" (SH_031015_LS). Building Seven Stories, he insisted, was the final move towards a valley centered on middle-class consumption.

In spatial terms, Ouseburn and EPSB shared similarities. Both peripheral spaces, one outside of the city centre, the other within but in many ways, as Newcastle City Council write, "cut off from the life of the city" (Newcastle City Council July 2016:7). Ouseburn was a brownfields site, unattractive for traditional development, whilst EPSB had been scheduled for redevelopment that was promised and then, with the recession, abandoned. The level of involvement by the city council in activities within both EPSB and Ouseburn was comparable. Ouseburn reflected a new symbiotic regeneration between the council and the artists working there. The council offices in the heart of the valley meant they could observe, and affect any activities, artistic or not, that occurred. In EPSB, councillors attended exhibition openings, meetings and events, not influencing but observing.

The difference between the two was the opportunity for ownership. Artists became rooted through property ownership in Ouseburn, as MM explained

> "MM: Umm we decided to move in…because it would provide us with a base of operations. We bought it…they couldn't shift us. Nobody can touch it now.
>
> INT: What even with the big regeneration plans?
>
> MM: No, my company owns the freehold and 36 Lime Street Ltd has a 99-year lease which has about 70 years left. and they're not allowed to sell the lease on without my say so. Nobody can buy it. And it's on…it's on a preferential rate so it's not worth anyone selling it. I mean if I wanted to sell it, it wouldn't be profitable to a multi-millionaire coming in because the rent is too low. It's all tied up.

> INT: So it would be pointless a property developer buying it because they wouldn't be able to get the return on their investment"
>
> (MM_280116_LS).

Ownership for MM meant remaining unmoved or unaffected by the incremental changes across the valley. Whereas the residents of EPSB could *manage* space, they never had the opportunity to *own* it. Whilst ownership presents its own challenges, the opportunity to make a move permanent was crucial. In the case of Ouseburn, remaining peripheral (at least until the Quayside redevelopment produced a perfect path into their midst) meant an opportunity to own, and therefore remain. CG reflected on this as we sat in NewBridge Studios,

> "If you don't own it you will keep getting pushed further and further and further out of things so maybe ….gotta get some ownership. But who can afford to buy it…it's easy to say just buy it eh? Like buy what…with what? What are you talking about? Dear Arts Council, can you give me a mortgage? ugh it all…yeah."
>
> (CG_250216_NH).

Without the opportunity for ownership afforded by better cultural funding, artists were condemned to movement in the face of more conventional rent seeking activity.

> "Will that make everything more expensive and actually the whole ethos of creating this whole ethos; DIY, affordable ummm space where we're very flexible…anyone can come to us and say I want to do this and we're like yeah, we've got a space there just do it. You know, how do we keep that and have to deal with all of these…with massive overheads basically. Of rent, business rates…how do we do that? And then I guess there's the other option of buying…looking into buying space, or building space. But then again, that's the same kind of thing. How do you ensure that you, that you can provide to a group of artists or recent graduates when your rates are massive?"
>
> (AP_13042016_AT)

AP outlines the reasons behind artists' seemingly constant relocation. Whilst prior research has tied this to a bohemian desire to find an area that drives their creativity

(Grant and Buckwold 2013), or assimilation into a newly formed creative class (Florida 2002), unsurprisingly, the answer lay in the continual fluctuations in rental rates.

However, I would argue that my fieldwork is unique in its contribution in that it revealed added insight into the *processes* of movement. The aim is to extend our understanding of these processes thorough a focus on the particular and the personal. Indeed, my fieldwork allowed me to be present as the first walls came down. In fact, the sound of demolition accompanied the process of writing my final chapters. My fieldwork also permitted me access to residents' personal narratives of movement. These narratives allowed me to trace the different cultural interventions across the city, not just from a spatial perspective (see map in Chapter 4) but also from a subjective angle. This approach allowed me to map the thoughts, feelings and experiences of individual artists onto the material space of the city. Their personal stories of movement, and repetition were useful in producing a history of artistic interventions in the city from the artists themselves – an approach that is, as yet, underexplored in current literature.

## 6.4 Personal Narratives of Movement

There were distinct intergeneration differences between residents. Whilst for the younger residents of EPSB this was a unique spatial moment – and that is not to argue that it was not; both the scale and size of activity was unparalleled - for residents in

the later stages of their careers, this sense of inimitability was not wholly shared. As PS explained,

> "as a 19-year-old organisation we've been through various stages of development as Vane and I kind of have seen…seen it all before I suppose is the point"
>
> (PSCY_240216_CUH).

The relationship between art and regeneration, typified by occupation and movement, was nothing new. This idea of repetition came up firstly in conversation with TE in Commercial Union House. At the time, I wanted to find out where all of these artists had come from, especially as the idea that they were all recent graduates was looking increasingly incorrect. She said,

> "Artists who came here include artists who were in Waygood and could not afford Baltic 39."
>
> (TE_140616_CUH).

The story of the transformation of Waygood Gallery into Baltic 39 provides added context to EPSB in that it provided a high-profile example of the changing relationship between policy makers, artists and funders. Furthermore, the implications of the events at Waygood were embedded in the subsequent decisions and movements of these varied actors.

Waygood Gallery was located on High Bridge, a small cobbled avenue between the infamous Bigg Market and Grey Street (the subject of previous heritage-focused regeneration projects and proudly voted 'Best Street in the UK' by BBC Radio 4). An artist-run complex centered on a former printing warehouse, Waygood was earmarked for redevelopment. Combining funds from Newcastle Council and Arts Council England, an ambitious redesign aimed to make the building, "the equal of other

Tyneside cultural venues" (The Journal 2012). Citing mismanagement, lack of a robust business plan, and £6m over budget with long delays, the council took back control of the capital project, namely the reconstruction and redesign of the building. Both Arts Council England and Newcastle Council withdrew from further funding obligations. The 56 artists who expected to transition into the new gallery, moved to temporary studios in Byker, outside of the city centre. The council took over the project, renaming the building High Bridge Studios before negotiating a deal with Northumbria University and Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art to run the 32 new studios and 2 gallery spaces. In April 2012, the building opened, renamed Baltic 39 – reflecting its address at 39 High Bridge. The complication for artists now residing in Byker was that the new studios in Baltic 39 were considerably more expensive to rent than the studios in Waygood. One artist was quoted in the Journal at the time of Baltic 39's grand opening:

> "It has been a long, emotional haul and long overdue. It has been nearly five years and it was meant to be two. I actually moved into the Harkers Building but it has been too cold to work there the past two winters and my work has suffered. The new building will be pure luxury. I'll have heating and a window."
>
> Excerpt from The Chronicle by Whetstone, D. 5.7.2010

This 'pure luxury' comes at a financial, and, in some ways, ideological cost. Waygood was artist-run; residents had access to exhibition opportunities. She continued;

> "We were gutted about that because we are not getting everything we thought we were going to get. The education programme has gone and that would have provided work for the artists. Waygood also built up an international profile for the artists who exhibited in the gallery. Now we will have nothing to do with the gallery"
>
> Excerpt from The Chronicle by Whetstone, D 5.7.2010.

The transition from Waygood to Baltic 39 demonstrated an interstitial artists' space become institutional - a formalised space, typified by a certain form of artistic practice and funded by structures such as Arts Council England or the National Lottery. This finding is crucial in our collective understanding of artistic practice within urban regeneration. Whereas previous literature would argue that artists are moved on to make room for commercial rent seeking activity, this is an example of artists being moved on *only to be replaced with more artists.* However, more commercially viable. As in Ouseburn, we see a gentrification of ideas – with only the right type of artistic practice being allowed to remain in the city. This version of culture-led regeneration is the hollowing out of inventive artistic practice for more palatable forms of artistic activity.

As well as providing a more nuanced version of culture-led regeneration, this narrative adds to our understanding of *emotional significance* of EPSB. For TE, who moved out of Waygood under the promise of better space following redevelopment, only to be priced out of the building in its new guise as Baltic 39 – her hopes and dreams for something different were tied up in the material space of EPSB.

TE was not the only artist affected by historic redevelopment. However, whilst TE was caught up in wider plans, moved from the city and back again, both PS and CY used their positions to 'piggyback' on three separate sites scheduled for regeneration. They began their gallery behind Newcastle Central Station. The area was popularised by a warehouse venue running regular 'Boilershop Steamers' combining local brewers, musicians and restaurants in a monthly night of excess. As P explained,

> "We started with nothing so…being run from bedrooms and piggybacking on other people's offices, other organisations offices…and we went from that to having an office to having a permanent gallery space or in between that, we're been moved before…for example we moved here because we were essentially pushed out of where we were before.
>
> INT: Ahh right, where were you before?
>
> P: We were behind the station, which is now the Stephenson Quarter down by the new police station. Our then landlord was Network Rail and we were forced out by regeneration, by the price going up. More fool us for not having a tighter lease. But ummm, essentially, we were priced out.
>
> C: Yeah we were"
>
> (PSCY_240216_CUH).

Their description of furtive activity in hidden spaces, of organisations run from bedrooms and other people's offices re-iterates ideas from Chapter 4 of a hidden ecology supporting inventive artistic practice. Again, this furtive activity is born out of a feeling of not belonging, of a presence based on inevitable transience.

PS and CY were moved on from behind the station so that the area could be cleared for a £200 million 'Stephenson Quarter' redevelopment. This new quarter will include two office spaces for 'high-growth' companies, a hotel and a University Technical College (UTC). The Boilershop now hosts weddings and corporate functions.

Moved on from behind the station, PS and CY took a space on Grey Street,

> "literally just down there [he points out of the window]. We can look through the window and see above the Central Arcade and we were in a space just there. Just before they were turned into luxury flats, you know working with the council. Umm you know but not only did we get access to spaces but we also got funding and that, which was nominally …the Grainger town funding the cheques came from the council. Ummm you know and also we had

concessionary rates before that, a lot of people seem to think that that's quite new but it's not - people have been doing it for decades."

(PSCY_240216_CUH)

What is interesting is that all of these interventions are cultural in nature. PS and CY were not moved on for traditional rent seeking development, but a form of culture that is more palatable and economically viable. In this way, activities in Newcastle upon Tyne reflect the global trend for the experiential in urban planning. The interstitial space that has formed in the cracks of formal planning is destroyed, or reformed to create a city formed of highly managed, highly secure, privatised spaces (Jacobs 1961, Zukin 1995, Sorkin 1992, Németh & Schmidt 2011).

Reforming urban space around more palatable forms of culture was a historic response to decline and disinvestment in Newcastle upon Tyne. The Stephenson Quarter and Grey Street bore traces of cultural activity – although repackaged. Again, EPSB is a unique spatial moment as it represents a schism in Newcastle Councils' previously myopic regeneration strategies. In light of the previous chapter, consider how Newcastle Council describe EPSB as an area that "lacks cohesion and vitality and borders dereliction in places" (Newcastle City Council 2016:7). PS and CY reflected on this,

"I mean this, and I remember there was something that went out about the same time as the block party and it implied the building was derelict…which it wasn't. it's not derelict

C: Yeah, you would think from the way this space is presented some times that it was derelict, an empty warehouse…..like a shell."

(PSCY_240216_CUH)

For PS and CY, representing EPSB as an 'empty shell' was a rejection of the ecology that existed within the block. Furthermore, it was a means to legitimise future development. I would argue that this section demonstrates that culture-led regeneration formed around the notion of a Creative City is no longer a preferred tool in urban regeneration. When the artists moved in, they were looking to abstract from their cultural capital - to use their presence as indicative of a progressive and Creative City. However, the new regeneration plan bears no trace of them at all. As the new Development Framework outlines, Newcastle's spatial strategy includes:

> "3. Promoting clustering of knowledge-based industries, universities, colleges and hospitals.
>
> 4. Supporting developments which enhance and diversify culture, leisure and tourism facilities."
>
> (North Area East Pilgrim Street Development Framework, Newcastle City Council July 2016:7)

EPSB will be repurposed for retail use, student accommodation and a boutique hotel. The council are erasing systematically all trace of the buildings and the community there.

In addition, in comparison to the historical examples above, the artists in EPSB are not being rehoused. In this instance, conversations between the council and residents about potential new spaces lost momentum. Relocation was discussed as a possibility when the Star & Shadow (an alternative volunteer-led cinema) worked with Newcastle City Council to move into a warehouse on Warwick Street. However, this relocation involved a fundraising campaign for £45,000 and to date, six months of building

works. That level of investment, both in time and capital was not feasible for the residents of EPSB.

What these stories demonstrated is a process of normalisation of inventive artistic practice within urban space. For Vane, this normalisation acted through movement. Each move instilled the idea that their form of practice would only be tolerated temporarily. For Waygood, this process was formed around the re-building of the venue. Removing informality in the built environment had the effect of removing artists who felt their practice no longer fit within this clean aesthetic. For Lime Street this was an internal process of normalisation through a homogenization and 'gentrification of ideas' through a membership that meant current studio holders selected their friends to any empty spaces.

## 6.5 Normalising Interstitial Space

As PS and CY's experiences reflected, Newcastle has displayed a certain level of myopia over their regeneration strategies. The pervasiveness of their formal design-led urban projects, or short-term spectacular is tied to the abstract notion that some modes of working, creating and living are inherently superior– more productive, feasible or aesthetically pleasing. Indeed Newcastle's urban fabric from the sixth floor of Commercial Union House reflected Hunt's (2004) assertion that the city is "more of a branding and marketing tool than a reflection of civic identity. It is frequently the work of quangos and consultants rather than the organic outcome of any home grown civic sentiment" (Hunt 2004:346). How does EPSB, as an urban interstice, differ from

the more formal interventions in urban space? Alternatively, framed in another way, what is changed when artist replaces planner? As Chapters 4 and 5 outlined, it engenders a precarious form of inhabiting the city, an informal set of artistic practices and a makeshift approach to building space. The interstitial is a pause, a chance for artists and developers to catch their breath and for the city to slow in its relentless (re) development. It grows in the cracks and the corners of the city left underutilised by disinvestment and decay. It is centred on possibility; and ambiguity as to what form it will take. As Sassen (2002) surmises, the city is a complex but, importantly, incomplete system. In this incompleteness, there is possibility for reinvention, for experimentation. If, as she re-iterates, the city is a living system, the interstitial is the connective tissue.

However, this in-between, this 'interstitiality' creates a tension. This tension arises when this fluid, bodily space is re-packaged as a model by policy makers, attempting to utilise the creative industries as a driver for economic growth. The fluid spaces of EPSB strained against the common conception of what a 'Creative City' should include, or look like. Their ambiguity strains against normalisation.

As with Coppola and Vanolo's (2015) work on Christiania, normalising interstitial space means to remove the ambiguity and fluidity in order to allow the widening of the spectrum of potential economic outputs. The first normalisation process I encountered was referred to as a 'gentrification of ideas'. As MM described,

> "some people left and other people moved in the people are interviewed by the members so they want people the same as them. But that leads to the, a sort of gentrification of everything. Because they cater then to their own market"

(MM_28012016_LS).

MM saw this as a form of creative stagnation. Surrounded by artists with similar ideas, practices, and ages the space becomes an echo chamber. Complexity was replaced with homogeneity, and conflict, the source of so much great artistic work, is filtered out. The fact that the continuation of the space was reliant on rental income meant that conflict was actively avoided at all costs. When an argument between one resident and the organisation that ran his floor blew up, he left. Citing an 'unworkable atmosphere', he moved out of his studio and around the corner. Faced with a shortfall in rent I asked WS what had happened to the radical potential of Space Six? How could the space they imagined, the place for alternative practice exist when this tension, between art and commerce existed? His answer was remarkable,

"Radical can only happen when there's no ramifications"

(WS_27062016_CUH).

I found this staggering. He felt that his work was ameliorative and had been co-opted into wider tensions within the city. Yet radical, by its very nature, can only happen when there is nothing but ramifications – that is what makes it a radical act. I still contend that art making itself is a radical act. Art making acknowledges that there are forms of knowledge that cannot be written down. It reminds us we are not simply minds dwelling in bodily containers; we are enmeshed in a matrix of relations between ourselves, others and the wider environment that contains, or constrains us. Art making recognises the agency in putting pen to paper, or paint to canvas. Art challenges conventions, and facilitates re-invention of both the self and society. However, WS felt constrained by both wider structures surrounding the block, and tensions within in. For him, these tensions denied the fundamental ability of art to act

as a radical act in and of itself. The spaces within EPSB are legitimised, and valued only when seen as a branding exercise for competing cities, rather than valuable for their radical, community potential. This is not to argue that practice was wholly hindered by these tensions; work still went on within the block. Rather, WS *felt* he has been co-opted into wider arguments. Again, this focus on feeling is important. The aim of this thesis was not just to start to map the wider structures that support or constrain artistic practice – but to add depth through an appreciation of the thoughts, feelings and experiences of those who are living it. By emphasizing the subtle nuances of art making in everyday life I respond to the need for research that is "*embodied* with actual flesh and blood and culture, with real life relationships and events" (Merrifield 2000:175).

The seemingly innocuous reason behind WS's frustration was a recent increase in the health and safety protocol in Commercial Union House. Whereas, in the beginning, each floor had been its own separate entity, able to shift and form their space as they saw fit, a management organisation had been formed. Aiming to oversee the building, this organisation introduced a spate of stringent health and safety procedures. The residents of Commercial Union house did not entirely begrudge the new procedures. Safety was always a concern, even more so in light of the events in Oakland, California. There, the artist-led Ghost Ship, a repurposed warehouse, burnt down during an electronica show. Overcrowded, and without adequate fire escapes, 32 people lost their lives in December 2016. This event led to a series of evictions and crackdowns on unlicensed music venues and communal housing across the United States. These events were particularly concerning for the residents of EPSB. My fieldnotes spoke of the fear that city officials would directly evict residents citing

safety concerns. There was also a feeling that the building owners would exploit these concerns as an opportunity to inflict further punitive inspections or evict tenants outright.

The relationship between safety and space was illustrated by AP's description of hiring a studio in Space Six. He explained,

> "Urrrrm and when they hire out to, when they do a site hire to a member of the public there has to be a concierge which costs a lot of money. They have to have a fire marshal and again, that fire marshal on the floor has to be paid so it's like, if I want to put something in to rehearse in the evening or have a yoga class they need to be charging so much. I think it's like 15, 16 quid an hour. And yeah they're lovely spaces and they're great for what you want but at the same time 15, 16 quid an hour is too much. It changes what you get in there. And they don't just want to be a yoga place. Like a yoga place just doesn't want to be in there. Because if you have a yoga place and a band in…you can't have the two. Or even if it's just a little bit of music"
>
> (AP_20012016_AT).

I think this description is fascinating for the way it describes something as simple as hiring a space. The first thing that strikes me is the *price* - £15 an hour is exceptionally low for city centre space. This low cost keeps the space affordable for both artists, and others – including their concession to 'yoga'. They support both a wide variety of artistic practice, but also a whole host of activities reliant on cheap, accessible space. Furthermore, we see the multiple concessions that occupying space demands, from ensuring a fire marshal, to mediating between musicians and yoga practitioners. The challenge of managing complexity in this instance is mediating the tension between 'safety' and 'creativity', or the freedom in which to be creative. Indeed, AP's descriptions of making the space safe bring to mind the parallels to restrictions on city space under the guises of better safety and security. He continued,

> "Everyone's working three jobs just to support what they're wanting to do and you're coming in and going we need 7 forms filled out please. And your like, why? What do these forms do?"
>
> (AP_20012016_AT).

Again, they did not entirely begrudge these procedures, their frustration lay with the seemingly endless tweaking and talking about how the building ran that slowed, or stopped creative work. There remained a cognitive dissonance between a desire for autonomy on the one hand, but safety, especially the safety that working with institutions affords, on the other. At the same time, these procedures acted to normalise the space *within* EPSB. This reminds us that the interstice is always controlled, or supervised by the institutions in charge of the land (Tonnelat 2008). 'Normalised' in this instance means bridging the gap – infilling the interstice and removing the less palatable elements. The council leeched off their authenticity, using their appearance as an edgy outsider to demonstrate their support of the arts, all whilst slowly submitting the spaces to more and more rules and regulations. They become domesticated – surburbanised.

Yet the city needs space to be weird, to be inventive, fluid and imaginative. Normalisation simplifies complex spaces and closes down possibility. We must keep cities complex but incomplete, always becoming, able to facilitate the inventive practices that thrive in the interstices. We do not want to create perfect city systems, rather cities that are lived, and that have contradictions. I would argue that normalisation, in regard to urban space, is an encounter between two conceptions of what city space should be. There are two logics rubbing up against each other - the logic of the urban planner and the logic of the urban dweller. Alternatively, to take

from Lefebvre (1991b) representations of space (the spaces of technocrats and planners) moves against representations of space. The city is siloed, with each logic dealt with in isolation leading to a legacy of incremental solutions and competing priorities. I would go further, arguing that the limitation of Creative City approaches is their reliance on standards and guidelines, creating reductionist ideologies for how cities should be designed, and developed. The equitable, culturally diverse and vibrant city that these ideologies outline never make it off the page. The problem with the symbolic is that it does not always translate into tangible benefits.

## 6.6 Re-writing the Creative City script

By tracing historical movements across the city, we can see the problems with the notion of a Creative City. This aerial view gives us the critical distance to observe the waves of regeneration away from the rhetoric of policy.

The North East of England has, and continues to be, perceived as a 'problem region' (Hudson 2005). Struggling with the loss, or decline of its chemical, steel shipbuilding and coalmining industries the region has suffered from unemployment and disinvestment. KH reflected on this in conversation,

> "For me, my overall ethos is life is really hard, it's pretty bleak and dark and we're all going to die and it's an unfortunate truth at the end of it but we are so you might as well have as much joy and colour on the journey though it and that's what culture does. Brings moments."
>
> (KH_29012016_CS).

For KH, art was an outlet, a form of escapism for both artist and audience. An opportunity to step outside of oneself and celebrate the 'moments'. In this, art has the

ability to slow, or even stop time – to change the pace of experience. Tension arises through the attempt to transform these 'moments' into lasting change. As Tonkiss (2013) acknowledges, these interventions can seem trivial, ephemeral "dismissed as temporary as if that in itself were a bad thing" (Tonkiss 2013:318). There was a continual pull between the transient and the concrete that highlighted the difficulty of relying on the celebratory nature of the arts to bring lasting socio-economic change.

Firstly because of the difficulty in measuring any form of change, particularly economic. In terms of economic benefits, numbers do not necessarily reflect the nature of the work, and any value derived from it. These numbers, gathered for funders and policy makers occlude forms of value that are intangible and contribute to a vision of a clearly defined, manageable creative 'industry' that does not reflect the reality of EPSB. Indeed, continued attempts at an impact report for EPSB, to demonstrate the economic value of EPSB to the wider city, have failed. Instead of an economic impact report, I found that participation was adept in exploring the many nuances and individual facets of practice. I argue that these spaces cannot be examined in any great depth without the actions of residents themselves – for buildings that are so physically present in the urban landscape they hide an unseen life that is rarely acknowledged. I could measure the number of visitors to the block; the minutes spent lingering over an artwork, but how do you measure smiles, looks and sweat on a brow?

Furthermore, I contend that 'change' is not always a synonym for transformation. There is an inherent problem in relying on 'moment's – or something ephemeral and fleeting to provide tangible change. I have outlined how unique EPSB was as a spatial moment, yet the idea behind the Creative City script is to produce a form of culture

that is repeatable: able to be replicated and developed anywhere without regard for the locality (Oakley 2004, Pratt 2010).

The problem with a script is that it is designed to be repeated. Yet the actual performance of the script will change with each iteration – perhaps the actor is sick or the audience too small. In relation to urban regeneration, a script is a useful tool to map potentialities. However, there is a gap between the structures that shape and how they manifest in everyday life. No script is unaltered after contact with a first night audience.

However, this script continues to be repeated in cities globally. By extension, this reflects a reversal of Bain's contention that artists are encouraged "to exaggerate and exploit their individuality and to feed into popular myths to reinforce their occupational authenticity" (Bain 2005:29). In fact, they must become homogenous to encourage recognition, and fit into this script. Whilst the residents inside the block are diverse, the block must appear the same as any other intervention made under the guise of culture-led regeneration.

## 6.7 Why do artists move? Dual Responses to Regeneration

I want to briefly respond to the continual claim that artists are always implicit in gentrification procedures. In this instance, the buildings were always planned to be used as retail/commercial rather than residential. They had a value that could be adjusted but not substantially increased by the activities within EPSB. Before residents moved in developers discussed the possibility of a Harvey Nichols or other high ends stores opening new branches within the same footprint as EPSB. However, I do

acknowledge that their continued presence contributed to the overall positioning of the city as a space for consumption. Both they and the council styled EPSB as an attraction, a place to be and to visit, thereby encouraging visitors into the city centre to stay and to shop. Yet I have demonstrated that culture-led regeneration formed around the notion of a Creative City is no longer a preferred tool in urban regeneration in Newcastle upon Tyne. The regeneration plans for East Pilgrim Street bear little trace of the community I encountered.

For the residents of Norham House, their abrupt relocation came with the notice of demolition. In October 2016, they received their three-month notice. The old Odeon building to their left had been subject to a year of intense argument over whether it should be designated a community asset and saved (its internal architecture was famed) or be pulled down to make way for planned regeneration. The protest failed: the Odeon was demolished. Around the block, the demolition notice solidified the development of the two competing responses to the ephemeral nature of EPSB that had been floating into conversations for some time. My fieldwork revealed a dual response based on the residents' location in the block. The residents of EPSB could be divided into two camps, roughly equating to their response to the news – in the face of impending demolition they would either 'fight', or 'flight'.

### 6.7.1 Fight

Mitchell (2003) argues that, increasingly, space is being produced for us rather than by us. He argues that inhabitants must re-appropriate urban space through a process of political mobilization that struggles for grassroots control of the production of urban space (Mitchell 2003:10). A reflection of this desire for grassroots control, these

residents saw their role in contesting and struggling against displacement. Their focus remained on reclaiming their right to the city in a Leferbvrian 'cry and demand' for both visibility and the ability to transform urban space. Their space was an experimental utopia, an emancipatory space for commoning. As WS articulated:

> "'Fight to the death and let it be a bloody battle', right? People here are rebels"
>
> (WS_020416_CUH)

As with Tonkiss' (2013) assertion that interstitial space involves working both with and against accepted authorities, this 'fight' culminated in an attempt at an impact report for a white paper. This white paper aimed to draw attention to the block, and its role in supporting artistic activity in the city. It was, as Lefebvre (1996 [1968]) outlined, a claim for the right to inhabit, use and appropriate space. Residents clamored for the right to say how the city developed and changed. In this, their contribution represented a "recognition of the need to reassert the right of inhabitants and not merely the rights of those with power and capital, to produce, shape, and use space according to their needs, wants and desires" (Lefebvre 1996 [1968]:158).

Indeed, a large number of artists have either started or developed their practice in EPSB. This led to a significant attachment to place as both structure (the building that supports their practice) and symbol. This was coupled with a deep mistrust of other studios around the city. As AP explained,

> "These blocks here are because Ouseburn's all graphic designers and they're, they're people who actually earn money…ummm…instead of actual artists."
>
> (AP_20012016_AT).

AP was concerned that Ouseburn had become unaffordable for the majority of residents in EPSB. I also saw in this conversation a separation between what he saw as commercially motivated artists (the 'graphic designers') and himself (an 'actual' artist). The implication being that being an 'actual' artist must always involve some form of financial hardship. There are parallels here with Bain's (2005) and Menger's (1989) description of artistic identity; authenticity here is still tied to the myth of the 'starving artist'. AP outwardly rejected the entrepreneurial narrative of artistic practice explored in the Chapter 2.

For CG, moving back to Ouseburn was out of the question, not because of an ideological mismatch, but the price of rental. She reflected on a series of meetings organised in summer 2015. To address the impending demolition of Norham House. Representatives from the Newcastle City Council, Arts Council England and practitioners from across the city gathered to discuss where the residents of Norham House could move to next. As CG explained,

> You can't just move back to Ouseburn…that initial meetings was kind of as soon as these places shut you can all just get studios at Cobalt or Lime Street and we were like, no. Because they're expensive…bit of a lack of understanding.
>
> (CG_250216_NH).

This excerpt perfectly outlines CG's experience of the disconnect between EPSB residents and Newcastle Council. The Council's suggestion that residents simply hire studios in Ouseburn reflected their lack of understanding about the reasons behind EPSB - the overwhelming desire for emerging artists to have cheap, accessible space in the city centre.

Echoing Highmore's (2002) notion of the everyday as an arena for alternative and resistant practices, residents saw the encroachment of developers as a battle to be fought. This fight was evident in the tiny acts of resistance. These were everyday acts, and therefore an ideal example of everyday life as "as both an accumulation of singular actions and (potentially at least) an arena for alternative and resistant practices" (Highmore 2002:11). Windows became an important medium to showcase opposition; demonstrated by this image of Norham House.


*Figure 24: A final message from NewBridge. It reads, 'build bridges not walls'.*

There was a guttural, emotional response to the possibility of demolition. When the meetings had failed, art making formed as a means of protest, as CG explained,

> "I think we just realised we've got all of this space at the moment let's do something, make a stance. Let's use art to kind of think about these things a little bit differently and perhaps challenge them so I think we're trying to program a little bit more to look at these issues, like the 2 day conversation and do we need to grow up…that kind of project. And Baz and we have a project in September with a group of activists looking at where socially engaged art and activism lies"

(CG_250216_NH).

There was a recognition this is a unique moment with the potential to produce lasting effects beyond the block. Art making was a means of thinking through their role within regeneration processes. Although not directly combative, their art making was designed to challenge the status quo.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, I worked with NewBridge on a project called Hidden Civil War. After over 10 months working within the block, I had developed a series of close relationships, reforming my position from outside observer to member (Jorgensen 1989). This provided me with the privileged position of being able to work alongside members of NewBridge, lending empathy to the process and, as Cornwall (2016) highlighted, enabling me to access the 'authentic voices' behind EPSB, viewing life from of the point of view of those who live it.

This month-long festival curated a series of interventions in the city centre that aimed to highlight what they saw as the existence of a 'hidden war' fueled by the Leave vote in the EU referendum, and an inter-generational divide that continued to fuel socio-economic inequality in the UK. I found myself caught up in a frenzy of activity, attending performances, talks and parties. We tramped the streets handing out the programme; designed as a tabloid newspaper called, interestingly, 'The Precariat'. We marched down Northumberland Street, and built a tower using blocks carved with the experiences of Newcastle's unemployed. We handed out balloons with subversive messages that read, "This is privatised space" or "No more petitions. Abolish Politicians". Of course, these were commissioned works by artist/activists such as

Richard DeDominici and Jimmy Cauty. NewBridge's and my own role was as facilitator not fanatic. However, in producing a set of works that placed themselves at the heart of the continued struggles of a city and a populace with high unemployment and loss of industry they spoke in volumes about their own self-positioning as urban provocateurs. It was easy to forget the temporary nature of it all. It was an unexpected and hopeful experience; like a sinking ship sending a flare up before it disappears. A last frantic blast of artistic activity that was fitting in a way: the notice of eviction for residents of Norham House was received just as the festival started.

### 6.7.2 Flight

Whilst residents of Norham House reacted to their impending relocation, others within the block were unsurprised,

> "people have been doing it for decades. Ummm so you know we've ridden a wave, it's literally a wave, it's literally up and down going from like being, having to deal with a major recession which, you know, totally alters our…totally alters our financial base and things like that. So, we've adjusted through that climate so whilst obviously we're looking at what happens next after these buildings we will adapt one way or another because we have to.
>
> C: Yeah, we've done it before"
>
> (PSCY_240216_CUH).

PS and CY prior experiences ensured their organisational structure was now adaptable to the 'waves' of policy and funding. They had no fight, having seen what fighting achieved previously. In Bamburgh House, ZA was incredulous at the idea that EPSB, in its current form could be saved. She explained,

> "DG: But if you look…I don't know it you know about this idea but what they wanted to do was get the Odeon, get a community asset transfer on that and when these buildings all get knocked down all the arts organisations and artists move into that building…

AB: A place with no windows…

DG: And floors that go like that [motions a crooked floor]

AB: Condemned, condemned…

INT: There's so many interesting plans for what's next for these buildings…

ZA: Yeah, yeah…

DG: But what's next is they're getting knocked down.

*laughter from everyone*

DG: That's what's next...

ZA: I don't get, when there's a document in front of them saying we're going to buy this and we're going to knock it down, it's definite and everyone goes, yeah but there's a way round this. And we're like, no there's not, these people have billions and billions and millions and they don't care about our site. It's going to go, you know?"

(ABDGZA_27042016_BC).

They raised an interesting point about a potential plan that had been whispered about the block - moving artists from Norham and Commercial Union House into the Odeon building. The Odeon would then be maintained by the new residents, keeping both the building from being demolished and the residents from relocation. However, as ZA explained, the building was in an advanced state of disrepair having been neglected for over a decade. Again, as in Chapter 4 there is an appreciation of the practicalities of working in interstitial space. This plan was seen as the height in artistic irrationality. Instead of opposition, they saw a value in the transient nature of their practice, not in the actual building and saw their role as a vital part of urban regeneration. As ZA and DG continued,

> "ZA: We're excited about this area being developed because that means we've done our part. You know the developers have done their part, we've done our part then if the council have any brains they'll push us to go to another area.
>
> DG: It's the nature of projects like this, you're in them while they get developed and if this gets knocked down we go to the next area that's being developed and live there.
>
> ZA: And it's well documented historically across the world how artist regeneration shapes cities"
>
> (ABDGZA_27042016_BC).

Residents of EPSB mentioned the idea of a 'role' or 'purpose' beyond art making frequently. Firstly, in relation to the wider artistic ecology of the city, and the part of these spaces in developing institutions despite their precarious status. As KH explained,

> "There are the pillars, The Sage, The Baltic and when people talk about culture in the region that is what they see. What they don't see is the underneath bits feeding the, feeding into them. All the graduates who know they're going to stay in Newcastle because they can get a studio and they like what they're doing there. There is a lot of places but they're very hidden"
>
> (KH_29012016_CS).

Again, we are presented with the idea of a hidden ecology supporting artistic practice. As KH explains, EPSB is important for the role it plays in the career path of artists. An incubator space for new or emerging artists. Nevertheless, the wider ecology is hidden - especially in regard to the 'bits feeding into' the established cultural institutions. I found it was not only the larger institutions with capital assets that were reliant on this 'feeder' system. Over time, a pattern emerged where established artists both in Newcastle and beyond used studio spaces in EPSB to house their assistants. I explored this in my fieldnotes,

> "The top floor of Norham House contained a small studio. Within it, two artists (I didn't catch their names) worked on an intricate sketch. I asked T what they

were working on later over coffee. She said it was for another artist, a big name"

(Fieldnotes_121016_NH).

This is not a new phenomenon, Warhol's factory model of the 1960's has its counterpart in the work of Hirst, Jeff, Koons and Takashi Murakami. Alternatively, we think of Velasquez or Rubens hiring an army of assistants to work on their sweeping historical paintings. Indeed, "to work for Warhol was to lose one's name" (Koestenbaum 2001:3) as your own practice was subsumed into production. Whilst Warhol provided the physical 'factory', the responsibility to find space was now on the helper and not on the artist. The entrepreneurial narrative is a means of transferring risk and insecurity and responsibility to find and maintain a studio space onto workers. At least Warhol housed his assistants.

For them, capital assets were not necessarily a benefit to their practice. Ownership presented challenges, as KH outlined,

"I mean Baltic might own the building but if they go bankrupt what will they do with it? They'll have to sell it. It's strong or as fragile as it's ever been. We're still going to be in the in-between zone"

(KH_29012016_CS).

ZA and DG saw their 'part' within urban regeneration as providing short-term space to creative professionals in lieu of traditional development. Not only do they accept their role within urban regeneration, they work with it,

"ZA: One of our trustees…

AB: One of our trustees for the charity is a developer and he's . . .

> ZA: Cold hearted hotel developer…these are the people you need to know.
>
> DG: Yeah, the trustees we have, we have a property developer, a guy from NE1 the city regeneration place and a marketing consultant in London, and me.
>
> ZA: Yeah yeah yeah cold hearted capitalist we want to develop everything into a hotel or a student residence …quite simply because he'll be in the room when they have their meetings about this, which will be years before the council or anyone else. How else do you access that information?"
>
> (DGZAAB_27042016_BC).

Combining art and commerce, they see an opportunity in this flux. Most importantly, they recognise where the power lies in this situation. Indeed, what this thesis demonstrates is a nuanced account of the power structures that promote or constrain artistic practice in the city. As explored in Chapter 2, current literature on the Creative City script frames regenerational efforts as a reciprocal relationship between state and city, city and artist. What this research demonstrates is an inherent imbalance between those who make the plans and those who live them. Again, we see the two logics, the logic of the planner and the logic of the artist rubbing up against each other. However, in this instance, certain residents within EPSB had internalised this 'planner's logic' to the extent that constant relocation was, to them, "just the natural progression of things" (PSCY_240216_CUH).

All residents of EPSB were enmeshed in a series of power relations that ordered their practice. I would argue that the two reactions to transience outlined in this chapter represent two distinct reclamations of power. The residents of EPSB that fought relocation felt powerful in their ability to promote direct action and activism against what they saw as a series of encroachments on diverse urban space by commercial activities. The residents that chose flight found a sense of power through direct involvement with developers, bringing them onto their board of trustees. The

information they received because of this (almost) reciprocal relationship made them feel powerful, able to know in advance, if not influence, the regeneration of EPSB. I realise that in reducing this complexity to the clarity of binary positions may seem antithetical to my aim of producing nuanced, empathic research. However, in this instance the divide was so sharp, and was so deeply embedded in residents' thinking that to understand this was to add richness to other findings within this thesis.

## 6.8 Praxis as practice

Residents of EPSB viewed themselves as a vital part of the Newcastle arts ecology. Their role was to develop the grassroots, which would, in turn, develop work to be shown in the larger institutions. As AP explained,

> "if we're not growing that grassroots it'll just…this really strong network that's already growing. If that's not supported and doesn't do well then the top work won't be as good because they'll have to get people from elsewhere and it doesn't feel local. And if the grassroots isn't strong then they're never going to be as strong"
>
> (AP_20012016_NH)

The idea that EPSB was instrumental in developing institutions introduced the idea that this was 'practice'. That is, the residents viewed this as a particular stage in a larger journey. Indeed, the constant use of the word 'incubator' 'stepping stone' or 'project' to describe EPSB by residents suggested that this time was a step on the way to something else. Again, we are presented with the idea that the interstitial is a 'pause', not just for the material space – but also for the emotional lives of the residents.

Again, this 'in-between', this interstitiality, is embedded in everything that occurs within EPSB. As CG explained,

> "Umm I mean I think what we do, everything we do is on the basis that we know we're going to have to move and that we'll either…we don't care we'll just leave it or we'll take it with us if we go somewhere. I mean it will be sad when we have to go. To leave it all behind but I mean…it's just change isn't it. Moving forward. Changing. I think it would be quite exciting to be honest….to start all over again. I guess there are a lot of things we would do differently now. Having been through it all…yeah"
>
> (CG_250216_NH).

EPSB was a sharp learning curve for emerging artists inexperienced in spatial management. Therefore, moving forward provided a 'blank canvas' – a chance to develop a space that reflected all of their learning. In accepting transience, residents of EPSB refocused their efforts towards the idea of their artistic 'legacy'. Art could not change the demolition, but it could change how the space was remembered. AB first raised this in conversation, it was a point of pride that not everything they had worked towards had been entirely in vain. He explained how,

> "We know the developers will catch up eventually. That's why we're focusing on our legacy"
>
> (AB_27042016_BC).

For AB, this legacy could be ensured through disseminating their ideas, practices and ethos to other locations unrooted from the physical space of EPSB. Faced with certain demolition and only possible relocation, residents of EPSB focused on leaving alterative traces on the fabric of Newcastle. Firstly, by developing education programmes delivered in house but accredited by larger institutions. As ZA outlined:

> "ZA: it's explorative. … no end goal like a factory. And to keep it really small but to allow the course to be organically responded to by the students and led like that but also using the live projects and the live experience, hands on

> experience of what the building is to give the students …you know, that edge up.. No other college gets to do that. The networks you plug in"
>
> (ZA_27042016_BH).

ZA, as well as other organisations within the block, had developed a training program as a response to perceived shortcomings of arts education in institutional settings. This was born out of a desire to foster and support alterative pedagogic model that challenge the elitism of certification and the institutionalisation of knowledge. She maintained that that large institutions were ill suited to developing models that responded to the small, specialist and often idiosyncratic artistic practices of their students.

For students the courses offered legitimization without the significant temporal or financial investment of formal education. The courses, in Perkins (1989) terms, provides a means of validation and authenticity: to prove to "society and ultimately the state that his service was vitally important and therefore worthy of guaranteed reward" (Perkin 1989:23). In forming their own legitimizing platforms through these courses, the organisations had a guaranteed pool of practitioners invested in their continuation. I contend that Newcastle upon Tyne became an artistic circular economy. Local universities had acted as the main feeder introducing art students to the organisations within EPSB during their studies. EPSB then acted as a final destination and a means to designate oneself as a professional artist. By providing courses themselves they could, in effect, control the supply chain of new potential residents and create a pool of practitioners invested in their organisation. This investment was not tied to the material space of EPSB, therefore could be transplanted to a new location when demolition finally took place.

The second way the residents of EPSB focused on their legacy was through disseminating their business model to other locations. For NewBridge this meant both

a distinct aesthetic style, developed incrementally and now transplanted to their new location. The NewBridge Project is no longer on NewBridge Street but retains an air of the old space. I visited their new location in October 2017. The look of the space was the same, as were the sounds and the smells. With an oversupply of aspirants keen to work in the creative and cultural industries, disseminating their business model to other locations reminded me of the popular saying, 'in a gold rush sell shovels'. In doing so ZA and CG had ceased to practice as artists instead becoming practitioners of a *method* of spatial creation.

At the end of my fieldwork, Norham House was demolished. Bamburgh House survives; the major power grid in its basement ensures the building resists demolition without a substantial amount of further planning. Commercial Union House still stands. Its southern edge joins The Old Police House - a listed building. For the residents of Norham House, their movement was not so much a line of flight once an area becomes inauthentic (Siegelbaum 2013). Nor did they stay in the area to become a new circle of gentrifiers (Florida 2002). EPSB resisted demolition, not through the actions of residents, but because of the intricacies of city planning.

# Chapter Seven

## 7. Conclusion

This thesis orientated itself through the everyday of users within interstitial spaces in order to investigate the connections between individuals, stakeholders and their environment as a product of everyday life. Consequently, there is less emphasis on remote, broad qualitative research that does not gather the "rich data" that "gets beneath the surface of social and subjective life" (Charmaz 2006:13). I want to begin this chapter by restating my main research aims and questions. Responding to a lack of literature that was attentive to particular idiosyncrasies of artistic practice within interstitial space, this research aimed to explore three interrelated research questions:

- How can we utilise an increased understanding of the everyday practices of artists to extend the conceptualisation of artist-led interstitial spaces within the UK?
- How does our understanding of interstitial artist-led spaces add to current conceptualisations of the Creative City?
- How do external factors and individual agency intertwine and interlock in the construction, habitation and vacation of artist-led interstitial spaces?

This chapter is now given over to a detailed thematic discussion of my findings and their relationship to the literature and key concepts. I close the chapter, and the thesis, with an exploration of future work.

## 7.1 Empathy and Embodiment in Urban Research

I began the second chapter to present empirical work with the contention that EPSB represents a form of 'dwelling differently' that is removed from traditional art systems of production and consumption. I content that the only way to explore this interstitiality is through a research process formed around direct experience, by being bodily present within the material space. In adopting such an embedded form of ethnography, I responded to the call for research that renegotiates the traditional relationship between researcher and researched, "thinking-with" rather than "thinking-on" participants. Research that involves "hanging out more….getting to know them as people" (Walmsley 2016:15).

The importance of contextual factors in arts research cannot be overstated: artistic practices are always situated and embedded. Furthermore, the production of theory is a social activity that is culturally, socially and historically embedded, resulting in 'situated knowledges' (Haraway 1991). This is reflective of Heidegger's phenomenology: because we are, 'in the world' any experience is perspectival, contextual and situated. I argue that the only way to represent the transient, interstitial lives of the residents of EPSB was through being and becoming a resident myself.

I want to use my conclusion to draw attention to the way in which participatory and reflexive research extended our understanding of empathy in arts and urban research. My research process was moulded around a reflexive practice that aimed to 'lay bare' both who the researcher is, and how they are consequential to the enquiry (Clarke 2005:12) before contact is made with the research setting, during the process of fieldwork and subsequently in the period after the research has ended (Roberts and Sanders 2005). Following Campbell I deliberately set out to place both the position of

the researcher and participants, including their emotional and affective experiences, in the foreground (Campbell 2002:123). This focus, I argue, enabled me to add an additional layer of meaning to the relationship between art and space by exploring what it is to 'be' within interstitial space.

This idea of empathy in research is interesting, and worthy of further discussion. Indeed, Gilbert (2001) argues that it is even dishonest for researchers not to draw on their own emotional experiences when "it is an awareness and intelligent use of our emotions that benefits the research process" (Gilbert 2001a:11). To empathise as a researcher mean *embracing* subjectivity rather than limiting it, and a call to acknowledge both 'thinking' and 'feeling' as central to the research process.

In this, I argue against Anderson, who makes the argument that the often schizophrenic focus of PO "diverts the researcher's attention from the embodied physical experience" (Anderson 2006:380). My fieldnotes include countless occasions where the embodied experience of being in the field was overwhelming. One clear example is the constant freezing temperatures in the studios during the winter months. My notes during this period focus on my inability to write due to frozen fingers, or my inability to wear sufficient clothing. This was compounded by the appearance of snow in December 2015, which coated us on the way into the studio, leaving damp trails across the carpets. What surfaced from this was a renewed sensitivity and empathy towards the precarious aspects of residents' experiences.

I continually struggled to prevent slipping into action research and trying to use my influence as a researcher to somehow stall, or halt the demolition of the East Pilgrim Street Block. In fact, this was something I was asked to do on numerous occasions – the artists seeing 'researcher' as more powerful in their ongoing negotiations with the

council. I found myself pulled to echo their frustrations – the removal of the block and its residents for another northern outpost of Harvey Nichols seemed, in the moment, unnecessary and vulgar. What emerged from these instances was a renewed sense of importance for the research. Whilst I never strayed into action research and tried to affect the outcome of the scheduled demolition, I felt that the new buildings would 'write over' the story of the current residents. This experience re-iterated the responsibility I held, as a researcher and the "ultimate arbitrator of the accounts proffered" that I was "accountable for those accounts" (Clarke, 2005:12), that is, for describing the lives of residents within spaces that were no longer part of the material space of Newcastle city centre.

Okely describes how "the memory of the field experience" is "unwritten yet inscribed in the fieldworker's being" (Okely in Bryman & Burgess 1994:30). Fieldwork for me was a distinctly emotional experience, spanning guilt, boredom, elation and the anxiety that came with short-term relationships, brief working engagements, and endless meetings. However, the emotional engagement of the researcher with the research experience is often underplayed (Brannan 2011). Researcher's feelings are often unspoken (Coffey 1998, Lutz 1988) under the assumption they will appear "immature, primitive, or even pathological" (Lutz 1988:41). In contrast, I want to draw attention to what Brannan called an "emotional encounter" (2011:324). By remaining attentive to my emotional experiences, feelings such as guilt and shame, boredom and frantic excitement I have produced a nuanced account of working in interstitial artist-led spaces. Through this, I demonstrated the power of the research process to make us think, but also to make us *feel.*

## 7.2 Interstitial Artistic Practice

This thesis has demonstrated that EPSB and, by extension, interstitial spaces have a value in and of themselves. This value is tied to the interstitial's ability to disrupt normative ideas about what constitutes artistic labour. Everyday life for residents is mundane, janitorial. In EPSB paying a bill, cleaning a toilet, or sending an email had as significance for the continued production of art as the art-making itself.

The second value lay in the interstitial's ability to produce and support a unique form of artistic practice. Identities within the space were complex, multiple and fluid. There was no 'typical' resident. I contend that EPSB facilitated a diversity of practice that did not encourage neat categorisation. Furthermore, residents would not stick to one practice; they shifted to take advantage of opportunities. Practice in EPSB was multiplicitous and fluid, disrupting the trajectory of a 'traditional' artistic career. These interstitial artist-run spaces disrupt traditional trajectories. They are always in-between, always interstitial.

My research revealed a form of artistic practice that is diverse, networked and collaborative, but also short-term. Indeed, it appears as though the residents of EPSB saw an opportunity in this transience, producing work that responded to their impermanence in creative ways. I witnessed a practice that addressed their uncontrollable impermanence by hosting events with impermanence as their key feature. In this, they strained against this traditional trajectory of artistic practice that places a position in a permanent exhibition in a museum or gallery at its zenith. For the residents of EPSB, the symbolic power of their physical presence in city centre space was more significant than the physical art works. As the majority of artistic activity was slowly pushed from the urban core, and whilst there remains a relentless

drive for regeneration, the interstitial is a pause, it is a celebration of the moment, celebrating that the residents are, however fleetingly, 'present' in the city.

In addition, I concluded that interstitial space has unique effects on the artistic body. Whilst previous research has explored the sensory and embodied aspects of art making (Merleau-Ponty 1964) there has been little research on understanding how this is affected by an increasingly precarious lifeworld. I argue that there is a distinction between precariousness and the Precariat. As defined by Standing (2011) the Precariat are a distinct social class, dependent on circumstances beyond their control, with identities and lives made up of disjointed bits. Framing artists as part of this Precariat encourages a misunderstanding of their own agency. For the residents of EPSB, their precariousness was understood and accepted from the beginning. Additionally, framing artists as part of the Precariat is drawn from a misunderstanding of the social production of artistic practice. EPSB socializes artists to seek non-financial rewards – peer recognition and personal satisfaction. Precariousness is therefore socially reproduced and socially accepted.

I contend that the residents of EPSB are not the Precariat, but they are in often precarious circumstances. Through precarious circumstances, the interstitial body is restricted, subject to extremes of temperature, food and rest. This interstitiality engendered an intense pressure, to create, to earn a living but also meet life's traditional milestones of marriage and children. The space makes demands of the bodies the same way they make demands of the space.

## 7.3 Process over Product

My thesis explored the process of spatial creation within interstitial artist-run space from the point of view of those who create it. In doing so, I aimed to produce a nuanced, detailed account of the realities of artistic practice within urban space. I argue that a renewed focus on the *process* of spatial creation rather than the end product is vital in helping to us to be 'present' as events unfold, to witness first-hand when, why and how multiple materialities and relations come together to form space. In the narrow focus on the 'built' environment, we miss the numerous urban spaces that are quietly and incrementally in the process of becoming.

Within the process of spatial creation, I want to draw particular attention to the importance of imagination. My thesis emphasised the importance of imagination in an environment subject to fluidity and flux. Imagination proves a useful tool – allowing residents to experiment, and play with the process of spatial creation without a significant time or capital. Whilst Tonnelat (2008) argues these cannot be known in advance, I would counter this with the fact they exist in the imagination of potential residents. The interstitial then acts as the connecting tissue between imagination and material space.

## 7.4 Aesthetics of care

Whilst it appears as if the buildings themselves were insignificant in the face of a networked, transient artistic practice, I contend that EPSB was, and remains, a node – a point of connection or intersection within a wider network. Residents therefore formed a network and are networked. Exploring this relational, networked space

within the conceptual framework of dwelling perspective revealed a new, fluid form of dwelling that thrives in the interstice. It is mobile and also fixed, ephemeral as well as enduring.

This process is supported by a hidden network of property owners and agents that operate outside of traditional art systems. This interstitial practice attracted a unique audience. The informality of the material space, the low cost of the performances and therefore the accessibility of his shows encouraged audiences looking to explore. The practice produces a unique aesthetic. I argue that this is an aesthetics of care, a tangible trace of residents' emotional investment in the material space of EPSB.

Two competing narratives of how the space should be managed moulded the process of becoming a resident within EPSB. For NewBridge, the process of becoming involved becoming a member. This membership provided *access* – to equipment, space and networks that are usually place based. Breeze Creative also provided access, but only to the physical space of your own studio. Rather than build a membership, they wanted to build a sustainable business model that could be replicated across physical locations.

I continually found it fascinating that the same block of city centre space facilitated artistic practice based on two entirely separate models. However, whilst the interstitial allows for attempts to dwell differently, these attempts are mediated by the literal and metaphorical concretization of the interstitial. The maintenance of the physical space becomes an imposition on the experimental nature of practice. The emotional investment that formed this aesthetics of care directly affected certain residents' ability to practice as artists. Interstitial space is a space of transformation, from one state of being to another. Therefore, in order to sustain the artistic practice of residents, certain

residents became managers. Management engendered a feeling of responsibility for the financial stability of the organisations within the block. This feeling of responsibility prompted two approaches to finance; one based on rental income supplemented by indirect patronage and public funding and the other solely from rental income, independent from traditional arts funding models. However, both received support in-kind through reduced rates and kickbacks. I make the case that this support produces an overwhelming sense of responsibility towards the council, property owners and even to the city itself. A responsibility to provide tangible benefits in reward for their continued support.

## 7.5 Responses to Regeneration

This thesis revealed two separate responses to the impending demolition of EPSB: fight or flight. Anatomising a desire for permanence and recognition, the first group saw their role in contesting and struggling against displacement. The encroachment of developers was a battle to be fought. Art making was a way to explore, and question their role within regeneration processes. The other group had no fight, having seen what fighting achieved previously. They would move on, accepting their relocation as an inevitable end to a residency structured around the whims of property development. Both groups were combined in their ability to reframe this interstitial praxis as 'practice'. As the redevelopment of the block began to erase their presence from the city, they focused on their legacy – the continuation of their inventive, fluid and imaginative practice removed, this time, from the interstice. With an oversupply of aspirants keen to work in the creative and cultural industries, disseminating their business model to other locations reminded me of the popular saying, 'in a gold rush

sell shovels'. In doing so, certain residents had ceased to practice as artists instead becoming practitioners of a *method* of spatial creation.

## 7.6 Re-Writing the Creative City Script

This thesis explored the form these interstitial spaces take, and the aesthetic implications of transforming tired office space into studios, galleries and workshops. I argue that there is a continued tension between being 'hidden' and being 'visible' in the city centre. The buildings have become a spatial form of white noise – hidden from the street and from general awareness by a façade of normalcy. This façade provided a space in which to experiment and remedy the difficulties of constant relocation. Conversely, residents also aimed for visibility – aiming to demystify artistic practice and place it firmly on the high street. Residents felt powerful, their continued presence in the city both a cry and a demand (Lefebvre 1996 [1968]) driven by the constant desire for legitimacy that drives them to seek a physical space and to name it a Creative Quarter. However, I would argue this visibility only extended to policy makers, property owners and potential audiences. As this chapter demonstrates, for the people I spoke to on the street EPSB was still 'the place you caught the bus to the metro centre'.

The final chapter of empirical work focused on creating a more nuanced view of the Creative City and EPSB's role within it. In this, I highlighted the continuing tension between artists (art) and urban regeneration (aesthetics). This tension arises from different concepts of artistic value, one remaining within the enclosed world of the arts; the other adopted and applied in a socio-urban context. This new relationship between the arts and wider economy seen in the development and constant deification

of the creative industries as a driver of economic development (Florida 2002, Landry 2008). Culture and creativity are reframed as factors for local economic development (Power & Scott 2004; Ginsburg and Throsby 2006) from aiding urban planning (Leslie 2005) to local regeneration and entrepreneurship (Lazzeretti et. al 2008).

To ensure this transfer of economic impact policymakers have sought to develop a symbiotic relationship between culture and urban regeneration. The hoped for results of this relationship are a symbiosis between two ideas of the city: the city as a site of inventive artistic practice and the city as a platform for urban revival and renewal. I refer to this phenomenon as the Creative City script. It is a script because its intended purpose is to produce a response that can be repeated. Scripts provide auditable evidence, with clear economic and social benefits. Complex questions are answered with clean and simple solutions, making them attractive to policy makers. Yet this script holds policy makers, developers as well as artists in tension. When urban space is valued mainly for its exchange value, Lefebvre argues, the true potential of urban life is suppressed (Purcell 2003). Indeed, the problem with scripts lies in their performance: once performed each script can and will change with every iteration. Therefore the idea of script providing tangible socio-economic benefit is at best misguided and at worst, a mistake.

My fieldwork revealed several iterations of this script applied in Newcastle upon Tyne. However, without the opportunity for ownership afforded by better cultural funding, the artists that drove this script were condemned to movement in the face of more conventional rent seeking activity. The aim of this thesis was not just to start to map the wider structures that support or constrain artistic practice, but to add depth through an appreciation of the thoughts, feelings and experiences of those who are living it. Sketching these various cultural interventions across the city allowed me to explore

personal narratives of movement, tracing individuals' thoughts and feelings onto the material space, extending our understanding of these movements through the personal and the particular. Indeed, whilst the distance between Ouseburn and EPSB is less than three miles, the emotional journey – thorough Waygood, Stephenson Yard and Grey Street – was immense.

I argue that EPSB represented a unique spatial moment; it engenders a precarious form of inhabiting the city, an informal set of artistic practices and a makeshift approach to building space. Yet tension arises when these moments are used to drive lasting change. I argue that processes of normalization sought to bridge the gap between EPSB and other cultural activities, bringing it in line with current conceptions of what artistic activity in the city could, and should look like. Increased normalization, in the form of increased monitoring from the council and increased health and safety procedures, acted to instill a reductionist ideology for how artistic interventions in the city should be designed and developed.

The Council and the property owners used EPSB's appearance as an edgy outsider to demonstrate their support of the arts, all whilst slowly limiting their complexity - submitting the spaces to rules, regulations, and relocation. They become domesticated – surburbanised. Therefore, I contend that spaces within EPSB were legitimised, and valued only when seen as a branding exercise for competing cities, rather than valuable for their radical, symbolic potential. The problem with these spaces, for cash strapped councils, is that the symbolic does not always translate into tangible benefits.

Accusations of gentrification, in this instance, are unfounded. The city centre block had an intrinsic value that could be adjusted but not substantially increased by the

presence of artistic activity. For the time being it appears that the Creative City is no longer idealised a tool of urban regeneration. As my fieldwork revealed, the regeneration plans for EPSB now demolition has begun, bear little trace of the previous inhabitants. They have been incrementally erased from the urban core.

I want to end this section by putting forward the idea that the Creative City script requires, at least, a substantial re-write. The Creative City script simplifies complex urban spaces and closes down possibility. Yet art making by its very nature is complex, inventive and fluid. Art making reminds us we are not simply minds dwelling in bodily containers; we are enmeshed in a matrix of relations between ourselves, others and the wider environment that contains, or constrains us. Art making recognises the agency in putting pen to paper, or paint to canvas. Art challenges conventions, and facilitates re-invention of both the self and society. By extension, any form of regeneration using this art making should be complex, inventive and fluid. We must explore forms of regeneration that keep cities complex, but incomplete. The gap between the lived city and the city that exists in our imaginations is immense; yet the inventive artistic practice that thrives in the interstices could, and should form the connective tissue between the two.

## 7.7 Limitations in the research and recommendations for future research

As with everyday life, research is always fragmentary and never wholly complete. This research in particular is tied to a specific space/time within Newcastle upon Tyne. Massey (2008) argued for research that was "imbued with temporality …a cut through ongoing histories. Not a surface but a simultaneity of stories-so-far." I recognise that

the end of the material space of EPSB was not, by any means the end of the 'story'. Therefore, this thesis, following Massey (2008) should be considered a "simultaneity of stories-so-far". Rather than highlight an absence of data for this research, this orients us to research that explores the continuation of artist-led spaces within new interstices – wherever they may be.

Indeed, whilst this research has been instrumental in documenting a specific moment future research could track the unrooted artists from EPSB to their new location, tracking the fluid social relations and practice across time and space. Through this longitudinal research, we can extend our understanding of the processes of movement throughout urban space, adding to the stories-so-far to create a more nuanced narrative for artistic practice in Newcastle upon Tyne. Additionally, some areas of the everyday of residents within EPSB remained unexplored. I did not explicitly collect data on the backgrounds, gender, income, and familial status of the artists I encountered. A more concentrated focus on profiling the residents could compliment the ethnographic understanding of practice that this research presented.

The research is clearly limited by the number of sites it encompassed. However, I was aware that working across further sites would have reduced the time I spent within EPSB, and the rich data that was the result of my extended time in the field. Indeed, my fieldwork never felt limited by the small geographical footprint. Artist-led spaces is a phenomenon that is entirely local, each space bearing the traces of its own locality, but also globally reproduced. Expanding out from the built environment of EPSB, further research should explore how interstitial spaces engage with the wider metropolis. This provides the opportunity to map the impacts of interstitial space on the socio-economic status of the city – not just one block of urban space.

Extending the concept of hermetic dwelling (Casey, 1993), further work could expand this research out into the world to consider the relationship between artistic practice, interstitial space and the home. As Casey (1993) notes, as we inhabit the built environment of cities we move from place to place but we also stay in place. In moving from the studio, to the home we can explore the dynamic between differing spatial practices to examine if other factors in everyday life also affect artistic practice.

An interesting point I did not get to expand on was these spaces relationship to third sector organisations. Due to my focus on artistic practice, I did not include charities, community groups, social enterprises and third sector organisations unless they had an explicit relationship to the cultural and creative industries. However, I was aware of a significant amount of third sector organisations reliant on interstitial space in order to provide continuing support in the face of constant funding cuts. In addition, I noted that EPSB was home to residents from across sectors – from solicitors to salespeople to social workers. Future research should expand the exploration of interstitial space towards a consideration of the effects on other forms of work within. In this, it could explore the potential of interstitial space that is not related to any form of artistic practice.

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# Appendix 1: Participant Protocol Sheet

From interstitial to institutional: exploring artists' experiences of place.

Participant Observation Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a study that investigates how artists make and experience urban space. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

This study aims to investigate how artists make and experience urban space, specifically in the temporary reclamation of derelict or disregarded spaces for creative 'meanwhile' use. Furthermore, how are artists affected by the imposition of formal planning on these informal spaces?

**Why have I been chosen?**

You have been approached as you have contact with spaces involved with the study. Information is being collected through participant observation of interactions within the space.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time. In this instance any data involving you, or created by your interactions will not be included.

**What will happen if I choose to take part?**

The researcher will be present to be able to observe the routines and interactions within the space. The researcher will not intervene or ask you to do anything. The researcher will make notes on what occurs, when and with whom. This may also be audio recorded for clarity though care will be taken to ensure individuals cannot be identified from details presented.

**What happens to the material collected?**

Data collected will be used to inform a doctoral thesis. All data will be stored securely both electronically using passwords and on hard copies in a locked safe. Hard copies of the data may be shown to the doctoral supervision team as part of the analysis process but will be anonymised before this and returned to the researcher. Data may be held for a period of up to 5 years to allow for publication purposes but both hard copies and files will be deleted or destroyed after this date. All data will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Who can I talk to for more information?**

The researcher is Rebecca Prescott, a doctoral researcher based at Northumbria University. If you have any queries about this research please do not hesitate to contact her at:

**Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University, City Campus East, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST**

**Tel: 07445430931 Email: rebecca.prescott@northumbria.ac.uk**

From interstitial to institutional: exploring artists' experiences of place.

Interview Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a study that investigates how artists make and experience urban space. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

This study aims to investigate how artists make and experience urban space, specifically in the temporary reclamation of derelict or disregarded spaces for creative 'meanwhile' use. Furthermore, how are artists affected by the imposition of formal planning on these informal spaces?

**Why have I been chosen?**

You have been approached as you have contact with spaces involved with the study. Information is being collected through in depth conversations.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time. In this instance any data involving you, or created by your interactions will not be included.

**What will happen if I choose to take part?**

The researcher will ask a series of questions and will make notes on what is discussed. This may also be audio recorded for clarity though care will be taken to ensure individuals cannot be identified from details presented.

**What happens to the material collected?**

Data collected will be used to inform a doctoral thesis. All data will be stored securely both electronically using passwords and on hard copies in a locked safe. Hard copies of the data may be shown to the doctoral supervision team as part of the analysis process but will be anonymised before this and returned to the researcher. Data may be held for a period of up to 5 years to allow for publication purposes but both hard copies and files will be deleted or destroyed after this date. All data will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

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**Tel: 07445430931 Email: rebecca.prescott@northumbria.ac.uk**

# Appendix 2: Participant Biography

| Participant | Biography |
|---|---|
| MI | Theatre practitioner and studio manager |
| CG | Trained as a visual artist, now running building |
| AP | Theatre Director and Owner |
| ZA | Visual Artist and now Building Manager |
| AG | Theatre Director |
| NQ | Theatre Producer & Director |
| DG | Visual Artist and Building Manager |
| PS | Gallery Owner |
| CY | Gallery Owner |
| KH | Artist, Creative Practitioner and Studio Manager |
| WS | Pupeteer and Studio Manager |
| PN | Painter & Sculptor |
| ME | Publisher |
| MM | Theatre Director |
| AB | Visual Artist and now building manager |
| G | Group consisting of a Dancer, Visual Artist, Theatre Practitoner and Sculptor |
| DB | Visual Artist |
| TE | Painter |
| LG | Visual Artist |

| | |
|---|---|
| UA | Painter |
| W | Artist and prior Building Manager |
| SH | Sculptor |